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G. P. KIRSCH

THE CATACOMBS OF ROME



1947

FRIENDS OF THE CATACOMBS
VIA NAPOLEONE III, 1
ROME

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G. P. KIRSCH

THE CATACOMBS OF ROME



1946

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SOCIETÀ "AMICI DELLE CATACOMBE,,

VIA NAPOLEONE III, 1

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PREFACE

About three years ago our Association of the "*Amici delle Catacombe* „ (*Friends of the Catacombs*) began its propaganda, which with the blessing and support of the sovereign Pontiff Pius XI was intended to diffuse the knowledge of the precious monuments of primitive Christianity, part of which are still hidden, others have not been adequately described, while most of them are certainly completely unknown to the great Christian family.

Our Association not only proposed to provide up to date information, in its periodical the "*Bollettino degli Amici delle catacombe* „, about the great work of discovery and research which is continually going on in the Christian archaeological world, especially in Rome, but more particularly to popularize as far as possible the historical and doctrinal treasure which is still enshrined in the catacombs "*for the nourishment of souls, the comfort of believers and the illumination of those who were astray*„, as we said at the time.

In order to carry out this proposal, our Association is starting the "*Amici delle Catacombe* „ series, meaning with this first volume, which we owe to the learning and study of Monsignor Kirsch, to initiate the accomplishment of our design.

Convinced as we are that the best justification of our programme comes from the Christian monument itself

which still gives us its clear and precious testimony, we knew well that the wise experience and fine intuition of him who has devoted his long life of study to the comprehension and interpretation of the voice of the monuments, would have provided us with this little treatise, which in its plain historical illustration of the Roman catacombs reveals the spiritual greatness of the first Christian community, and the integrity of Catholic doctrine.

This first volume by Monsignor J. P. Kirsch, who has been entrusted by the Holy Father with the direction of his Pontifical Institute of Christian Archeology, gives the tone to the whole series, because although it is written with the object of popularizing Christian archaeology, it is regulated by rigorous scientific criteria, which, here especially, make this historical discipline a real "magistra vitae".

The "Amici delle Catacombe" series will consequently be useful not only to those who are ignorant of Christian archaeology and wish to acquire some acquaintance with it, but also to those who, having studied the subject, need to know the definite results that have been attained in this field of historical science and to be able to make use of it for teaching.

With this object especially in view a bibliography has been appended to this volume which gives all the available indications to those who wish to make a special study of any particular catacomb.

GIULIO BELVEDERI

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

This English edition differs slightly from the original Italian one of 1933. With the Author's approval a few unimportant modifications have been made in the text and the book has been brought up to date.

Also, some of the illustrations included in the original edition are no longer available. They have been replaced, when possible, by others of the same type.

PART I — A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE CATACOMBS

I. THE CEMETERIES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS

The word Catacomb is commonly used to designate those places of sepulture, chiefly of the Christians and the Jews, which were excavated underground for a certain extension, and according to a systematic plan. These subterranean places are called catacombs, to distinguish them from cemeteries in the open air, where the tombs and sepulchral chambers were made on the surface within an area destined for burial, and from which the name of "areae", commonly applied to such cemeteries, is derived.

Both of these methods of preparing burial places were in use in ancient Christian times, according to the regions in which they are found. Generally speaking it can be said that the early Christians made use almost everywhere of open air cemeteries. In these the tombs consisted of graves dug in the ground (*formae*), detached sarcophagi standing about the area, mausoleums and sometimes isolated hypogaea with chambers excavated below the surface and reached by steps.

Up to the present no true catacombs have been found in the East, although a few large hypogaea have

been discovered, e. g. at Ephesus beneath the church of the Seven Sleepers. On the other hand, all over the East and also in Egypt we find open air cemeteries with various forms of tombs.

In most of the western provinces of the Roman Empire also the burial places of the Christians were usually outdoor cemeteries; this, with rare exceptions, was the case in Africa, in Spain, Gaul, northern Italy, Dalmatia, and in the Danube provinces. Through all these vast regions, in Africa alone are found a few genuine catacombs, viz. extensive subterranean cemeteries excavated for the purpose, such as for instance those at Sousse (Hadrumetum).

The catacomb method of interment is found mainly in Rome and in the surrounding district, at Naples, in Sicily, where the catacombs of Syracuse are the most important, and in the island of Malta. In these parts of the Empire, underground cemeteries with a regular system of galleries and chambers were the prevailing mode of interment among the Christians.

Even here however we find Christian cemeteries above ground, not only after the discontinuation of subterranean burial at the beginning of the fifth century, but also contemporaneously with the use of the catacombs.

In these areas intended for sepulture, and constituted as such according to the prescriptions of the law, not only were catacombs excavated below, but interment was also carried out above ground in the form of separate tombs and hypogaea, either partly or entirely excavated under the surface and similar to those adopted by Pagan families in Rome and in other cities of the Empire.

In the earliest period of Christianity, i. e. in the first century and the opening years of the second, the interment of the faithful, who as yet were comparatively few, must have taken place in private burying places belonging to Christian families, and this applied not only to the members of the family, but also to the poorer Christians who had no means of providing a place of sepulture for themselves. To these accordingly a Christian landowner would give the necessary ground for the required graves, on his property, and naturally near to his own hypogaeum. In this way family burial places, enlarged but always isolated, must have been the first form of Christian sepulture both in Rome and elsewhere. Very soon therefore, at the beginning of the second century, we find rich Christian families in Rome making additions to their original hypogaea in the form of galleries excavated in the tufa, in order that the rapidly increasing number of poor Christians might be provided with a suitable resting place for their dead.

These galleries were made in communication with particular hypogaea, situated respectively within a larger sepulchral area, and were placed at the disposal of the poor by the Christian proprietor. In this way were formed the nuclei of the most ancient Roman catacombs at the beginning of the second century, as we shall see in the following pages.

The variations in the structure of the catacombs depend on the nature of the rock in which they are excavated. The catacombs of Naples and Syracuse, for instance, being constructed in a hard unstratified rock, exhibit higher and wider galleries and tombs of a more

monumental description than those of Rome and the surrounding district or those of Africa, which are cut out of a softer and more friable rock. The general arrangements of these imposing monuments, so unique of their kind, especially as regards the large scale on which they are made, are similar all over the Empire wherever they are found. Of these, the most numerous, the largest, the most ancient, and the richest in iconographical and epigraphical monuments and in primitive sepulchres of celebrated martyrs, are the catacombs of Rome.

II. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CATACOMBS

According to the general custom throughout the whole of the Roman Empire, there was no public cemetery belonging to the city of Rome. Every free inhabitant of the town was at liberty to provide a tomb for himself and his family on any spot he chose on his own domain. He could also concede a determined area of his property as a place of sepulture to other people,

The deposition of a corpse in any given spot rendered that place inviolable, and the tomb was protected by Roman law. All tombs were necessarily outside the city walls, burial inside the town being strictly prohibited.

Sepulchral monuments were consequently erected along the public roads, and were found lined up on either side of the way, starting from the city gates, in every shape and size.

When Christianity first appeared in Rome and began to be diffused among its inhabitants, the corpses of the pagans as a general rule were burned, the ashes being placed in small terracotta urns. In the case of rich families these were substituted by precious urns of marble or alabaster which were placed in underground chambers, either in niches in the walls or else deposited under the flat bases of the niches (*Columbaria*).

A few ancient families however buried their dead

Fig. 1 — Ancient
entrance to the so-called
Hypogaeum of the Flavi
at Domitilla.



unburnt, depositing them in stone or marble sarcophagi in underground chambers, or sometimes directly in a tomb beneath a wide vaulted niche cut out in one of the walls of the chamber. An example of this form of interment is preserved in Rome in the "Tomb of the Scipios," on the via Appia.

The Jews, a great many of whom inhabited Rome at this time, also used this method of burial, the burning of the body was repugnant to their ideas and they consigned it to the earth intact. They constructed underground public cemeteries in Rome for their own

use, thus maintaining themselves as a separate community even after death.

The Christians also never burned the bodies of their dead, the Christian families of Rome in the first century of our era made tombs in their own



Fig. 2 — Stair in the catacomb of S. Pamphilus.

property outside the city walls to serve for those members of their families who had embraced the Christian faith. As early as the first century the Gospel had made converts among the rich and noble families of

the capital, in some even of the greatest, such as that of the Flavii, which had risen to the purple with the



Fig. 3 — Gallery with intact loculi in the cemetery of S. Pamphilus.

Emperor Vespasian, and the senatorial family of the Acilii Glabriones, (fig. 1) and there is no doubt that the first burial places of the Christians in Rome were as a

general rule the family sepulchres of the richer Christians in their own property, other tombs in communication with these being prepared for those who were poorer. The usual method was to construct subterranean galleries



Fig. 4 — Crypt in the cemetery of S. Pamphilus.

in connection with the early sepulchral chambers. These were necessarily at a given depth in the tufa, accessible by means of stairs (fig. 2), and were about a metre in width and from two to three metres high, the tombs being cut in the walls (fig. 3). Often larger chambers excavated in the tufa opened out of these galleries,

providing space for the bodies of entire families, or for a number of other deceased persons (fig. 4 and 6).

In a few rare instances the proprietors conceded



Fig. 5 — Loculi with painted inscriptions in the cemetery of S. Pamphilus.

some abandoned quarry situated near their family tomb as a burial place, the graves being cut in its irregular galleries formed by the removal of the stone.

With the successive formation of other new galleries beneath the original sepulchral area (this area being gradually enlarged as the need arose) that imposing



Fig. 6 — Crypt decorated with marble in the catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.

network of galleries and underground chambers known to us as the Roman catacombs was evolved during the course of the first four centuries.

The form of the tombs is varied, but four different types were in general use. Rich families used marble sarcophagi adorned with sculpture, which were placed in large niches or ranged along the walls of the sepulchral chambers or wider galleries.

Another type of handsome tomb was cut in the rocky wall in the shape of a deep wide niche usually with a semicircular vault above corresponding to the length of the grave which was cut beneath it, and closed, after the deposition of the corpse, with a large rectangular slab of marble placed horizontally over the aperture of the grave (*Arcosolium*) (fig. 9).

The greater part of the tombs however are simpler, consisting of a rectangular horizontal niche, just high and deep enough to hold one corpse, or occasionally two or three laid side by side (fig. 5). The opening of this niche (*Loculus* = small tomb) on the gallery was closed with a slab of marble, or else with large tiles placed in a vertical position and attached with cement. Very often small glass vases for liquid perfumes were cemented on to these wall tombs, or small pottery lamps which were lit when the tombs were visited. Small objects were often stuck into the cement of the closures of the loculi (ivories, coins, gilt glasses etc.) by way of decoration (fig. 7 and 8).

Tombs were also frequently excavated in the floor (*formae*) which after the deposition of the corpses were covered with thick solid slabs of marble. Every here and there the roofs of the chambers and galleries were pierced by large rectangular shafts which admitted light and air from above (*luminariae*). When the sides of a gallery were filled up with tombs, the space required

for more tombs was occasionally obtained by deepening the floor till the original height of the gallery was doubled or tripled.

The Christians gave the name of *Cemeteries* to their burial places, from the Greek word meaning "dormitories,, because death was to them merely a period of repose until the resurrection.



Fig. 7 — Ivory jointed doll cemented beside a loculus in the Anonymous cemetery of Via Tiburtina.

The various burial grounds were usually named after the original founder in whose property the first hypogaea of the cemetery had been made: e. g. the cemetery of Domitilla, of Priscilla, of Pretextatus, of Commodilla. Otherwise they were known by popular denominations, especially when there was no danger of their being confused with other burial places, e. g. "between the two laurels,, (*inter duas lauros*), "at the watermelon hill,, (*ad clivum cucumeris*), "in the hollow,, (*in catacumbas*). The cemetery on the Via Appia to

which this last denomination belongs, arose during the third century in a spot where there was also a sanctuary in honour of SS. Peter and Paul the chief of the apostles, and where S. Sebastian, a Roman martyr of the persecution of Diocletian, was also buried. A basilica was erected in the middle of the fourth century over this sanctuary of the two chief apostles and over the crypt of S. Sebastian, communicating with the subterranean region below. This remained accessible, or at any rate partially so, during the whole of the Middle Ages and even later, while the other subterranean cemeteries of Rome gradually fell into oblivion from the ninth century onward, and were no longer visited.

As a consequence of this, when the latter were rediscovered at the end of the sixteenth century, the name of "Catacomb", which originally had been the special denomination of the cemetery in the hollow of the via Appia, was attributed to the other subterranean cemeteries formed in the same way, and became used as a generic term to describe all this species of burial ground.

Of all the catacombs which have been discovered and explored up to the present moment, the two most ancient are those of Domitilla on the via Ardeatina and of Priscilla on the via Salaria. Their origin goes back to the end of the first century or the opening years of the second, viz. to the immediately post-apostolic period. During the course of the second century they were considerably enlarged, and at the same time new catacombs were added to their number, as has been clearly shown by the excavations, e. g. the cemeterial

regions on the via Appia, which were enlarged later on under the deacon Calixtus and took their name from him, the catacomb of Pretextatus on the same road, the *Coemeterium maius* (Great Cemetery) on the



Fig. 8 — Gilt glass representing S. Agnes, fixed in the cement of a loculus in the Anonymous cemetery of Via Tiburtina.

via Nomentana, and the catacomb of Calepodius on the via Aurelia.

During the third century all these catacombs were notably enlarged on account of the ever increasing number of the members of the Christian community at Rome, which reached about forty thousand by the middle of this century. Several new catacombs also appeared after the opening of the third century, e. g. the

cemeteries of Pamphilus, Maximus, Thrason, the Jordani on the via Salaria, S. Hippolytus and S. Laurence on the via Tiburtina, the cemetery *inter duas lauros* (between the two laurels) on the via Labicana, the cemetery *ad Catacumbas* on the via Appia, and the cemetery of Pontianus on the via Portuense. It is not possible to determine the date of origin of some of the other catacombs, since they have not yet been sufficiently explored.

The most ancient catacombs were made by private people in their own domains, and they continued to be the private property of the families who had made them during the whole of the second century, even when they had been extended by the addition of more numerous and imposing galleries for the use of the community at large.

About 200 A. D. however the Roman Christians acquired a subterranean burial place on a larger scale, which was a genuine public cemetery and the property of the community as such, and was personally administered by the bishop and deacons of the Roman church. A large piece of ground on the via Appia, on which a small Christian burial ground already existed, had passed into the possession of the Christian community, probably as a gift from the proprietor, who may have been a member of the family of the Caecilii. The reigning Pope Zephyrinus (199-217) entrusted his deacon Calixtus (who eventually succeeded him in 217 in the chair of S. Peter) with the administration of this cemetery, which Calixtus enlarged by opening new galleries excavated within a determined area according to a regular plan, and by preparing fresh tombs. This catacomb therefore was

named after Calixtus, and retained his name in spite of the fact that this Pope was not buried here after his martyrdom, but in the cemetery of Calepodius on the via Aurelia. During the course of the third and fourth centuries all the larger catacombs gradually passed into the possession of the Roman church, either as gifts or otherwise, and were placed under the exclusive administration of the Roman clergy. The proof of this fact is furnished by the construction of cemeterial basilicas during the course of the fourth century, and by all the arrangements in connection with the cemeteries of that period.

With the erection in Rome of the titular churches, which may be considered as parish churches, each of the great catacombs from the third century was specially attached to one of these, perhaps to the nearest. In this way the priests and minor clergy of the title officiated at the liturgical functions in the cemeteries and were partly responsible for their administration, the general superintendence meanwhile remaining in the hands of the deacons.

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CATACOMBS.

THE TOMBS OF THE MARTYRS.

The catacombs, both as regards their use and origin, are exclusively places of burial, and retained their character as such up to the middle of the third century. It is to be strictly excluded that religious services were regularly held there on Sundays or other

days. The meetings for Divine worship took place in special halls inside houses in the town, and as early as the third century the Christian community possessed several of these house-churches, *Tituli*, in which a certain number of presbyters also had their residence.

The only service held in the catacombs was the liturgical celebration which accompanied the deposition of the corpses, part of which consisted, as early as the end of the second century, in the offering of the Eucharist in suffrage of the souls of the departed. This celebration was limited to the family and friends of the deceased, and a few poor of the to whom a banquet was offered by way of alms (*agape funeraria*). While this took place occasionally in the larger underground chambers which were near the tombs, e. g. the so-called Cappella Greca of the cemetery of Priscilla, it was effectuated as a general rule in a building constructed expressly for the purpose above the catacomb.

During the third century especially several of these halls were erected, there are examples over the catacomb of Calixtus and at the entrance of Domitilla. In the biographical notice of Pope Fabianus (236-250) in the fourth century catalogue of the Popes, called the *Catalogus Liberianus*, it is said that this Pope "made many buildings in the various cemeteries,„

As early as the first half of the third century a special liturgical cult was formed in Rome in honour of the martyrs of the Roman community, in order that the day of the death and deposition of these glorious witnesses of the Faith might be commemorated regularly every year by the entire community by the liturgical

celebration of the Eucharist, and by suitable prayers and readings.

The cult of the martyrs was associated from the very beginning with the tombs which contained their mortal remains. The Eucharistic sacrifice therefore took



Fig. 9 — Crypt with *arcosolium* in the catacomb of Domitilla.

place at their tomb in the cemetery on the anniversary of their death. Those who desired to show them special honour, and wished to secure their intercession and assistance in their private troubles or in critical moments of their lives, went there also to make their prayers.

In this way the catacombs became places of cult

as early as the middle of the third century, sanctified as they were by the tombs of the Roman martyrs, and either actually within the catacombs or else in halls constructed over them above ground, the Eucharistic sacrifice was celebrated regularly on the day of the martyr's death, and later on also on other days of the year, and people met there freely to venerate the martyrs.

Then in the fourth century the underground chambers or galleries where there was a martyr's tomb were enlarged and richly decorated and provided with new stairs to make them more easily accessible to pious visitors. Pope Damasus (366-384) who was indefatigable in these works, is specially noted for the short poems he composed in honour of the martyrs. These were carved in magnificent script on large slabs of marble and placed over their sepulchres. The piety of the populace was not however limited to the enlargement and decoration of these subterranean shrines, but over the catacombs where these tombs existed churches and even large basilicas were erected in communication with them.

Since tombs of martyrs are found in almost all the large cemeteries of Rome, nearly all the catacombs acquired one or more cemeterial basilicas during the course of the fourth and fifth centuries. These were constructed above ground over the catacombs below, a special stair leading down from the basilica to the martyr's tomb. Or else the edifice was made in the catacomb itself, a space being cleared for the purpose around the tomb. Both in this case and in that where the sepulchre of the martyr was in an outdoor cemetery, the basilica

was oriented in such a way that the altar came directly over the tomb (fig 10).

In this way, during the course of the fourth and



Fig. 10 — Cemetery basilica of *SS. Nereus and Achilleus*
in the catacomb of Domitilla.

fifth centuries, the city of Rome became encircled by a regular succession of these churches and chapels, both within and above the catacombs, in which the natal

day of the martyrs was celebrated, and where Christians from near and far betook themselves even on other days to honour the martyrs and invoke their intercession. Moreover during this same fourth century the Roman Christians no longer limited their burials to the underground galleries of the catacombs, but began to bury also close to the cemeterial basilicas and even within them.

In the second half of the fourth century the outdoor cemeteries above the catacombs came into more general use, until in the first half of the fifth century interments no longer took place below, and consequently those parts of the catacombs where no martyr tombs existed, were no longer cared for or visited, and gradually fell into oblivion. Thus the ancient galleries were completely abandoned, the underground chapels of the Roman martyrs only being carefully preserved and even handsomely decorated, together with the stairs and galleries leading to them. These parts of the catacombs became regular places of prayer where Roman Christians and pilgrims from afar alike descended for prayer and devotion. The cult of the Roman martyrs at their tombs developed steadily from the fourth century onwards, attracting crowds of recently converted pilgrims to Rome, from France and Spain, from Germany and England.

During the siege of Rome by the Goths in the sixth century, the shrines of the martyrs must have been seriously devastated. We find evidence of this almost everywhere in the restorations made after the siege and the departure of the Goths. They suffered still more during the long period of the Lombard wars of the seventh and eighth centuries, when the whole

vast region surrounding Rome was devastated, and the population of the city, reduced to want and misery, steadily decreased. As a natural consequence, the sanctuaries of the martyrs outside the city became ruined and desolate. It is true that the Popes attempted to restore churches and chapels, and to encourage visits to the martyr's tombs, but these efforts met with so little success that in the eighth and ninth centuries the Popes themselves reluctantly decided to transport the bones of the martyrs from their primitive resting places to churches within the city. These translations took place during the ninth century, when all the bodies of the martyrs were removed from their tombs and deposited in the churches inside Rome, exception being made in favour of those basilicas only which still exist outside the walls. Here the bodies of the titular martyrs were allowed to remain, the basilicas being restored and kept in repair for the maintenance of their cult, and in most cases, fortified. The tomb of S. Hyacinth however, in the catacomb of Basilla, had become hidden under the accumulation of soil in the crypt, and was not found at the time of the translation of Protus his companion. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when excavations were made in this cemetery, the tomb was accidentally found, still intact, and with its inscription still in its place.

When the relics of the martyrs had all been removed from their underground graves and their churches over the catacombs, the latter were completely abandoned, the galleries became gradually blocked with earth, and the wild vegetation of the Campagna covered those places where the bodies of the martyrs had once reposed

and where the tombs of the Christians of the first centuries still were to be found. This state of oblivion lasted till the end of the sixteenth century, when some work carried out in the grounds of a villa laid bare a vanished catacomb, and the study and exploration of these ancient Christian monuments was at last made possible.

IV. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN THE ROMAN CATACOMBS.

The interest which scholars began to take in ancient monuments during the period of the Renaissance and Humanism in the second half of the sixteenth century was extended also to those glorious Christian monuments, the catacombs of Rome. An accidental discovery which took place in the year 1578, awakened this interest in a remarkable way. During some works undertaken on the via Salaria nuova, in the grounds of a villa on the right side of the road, part of an ancient Christian catacomb came to light, with crypts and galleries lavishly decorated with well preserved paintings, and containing many sepulchral inscriptions. This wonderful discovery made a great stir, especially arousing the curiosity of students of antiquity and ecclesiastical history.

The subterranean cemetery thus recovered was that of the Jordani. A learned Fleming, Philip de Winghe, and the historian Alfonso Ciacconio had copies made of the paintings found, and these copies are still preserved in codici of the Vatican Library and the Biblioteca Vallicelliana. Some of the inscriptions, most of which were broken and displaced, were also copied.

A manuscript on the iconographical monuments, prepared at the time by the archaeologist Jean L'Heureux (Macarius), was published only in 1856 by P. R. Garucci, Paris, under the title *Hagioglypta sive picturae et sculpturae sacrae antiquitatis*.

The galleries of the subterranean cemetery however only remained accessible for a few years, and these first studies of a Roman Christian catacomb were not pursued further.

In 1593 Antonio Bosio, called by Gio. Battista de Rossi "the Columbus of the catacombs", started systematic explorations in the ancient cemeteries of "Underground Christian Rome", which he carried on with unremitting energy and very rich results right up to the time of his death in 1629. Bosio discovered a great many catacombs on various roads outside the city walls, had copies made of the paintings, drew up the plans, copied the inscriptions, and had drawings made of the cubicula and decorated arcosolia.

By studying the documents and the historical and legendary sources he collected the material for the scientific publication of the monuments found, and at his death left the manuscript for a large volume in folio which was published by P. Giovanni Severano dell'Oratorio in 1632, under the title of: *Roma sotterranea, opera postuma di Antonio Bosio, Romano, antiquario ecclesiastico dei suoi tempi*. This work, which was profusely illustrated, became the basis for the study of the Roman catacombs and of their iconographic and epigraphic monuments during the centuries which followed. A Latin edition in two volumes was brought out by the oratorian Paolo Aringhi (Roma 1651), this edition

was reprinted at Paris and Cologne in 1659. An extract in Latin was published at Arnheim in 1671, in German at Arnheim in 1668 and at Amsterdam in 1671. In p. Aringhi's edition several monuments were added which were discovered after Bosio's death.

The diffusion of the work of the great archæologist Bosio led to the study of the monuments of the ancient Christian cemeteries of Rome as an important source of knowledge of the religious life of the first centuries. Unfortunately however, Antonio Bosio had no successors capable of continuing the work he had begun so well.

Indeed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the researches in the Roman catacombs degenerated into a search for what were presumed to be bodies of martyrs. This arose through an absolutely false conception, viz. that certain symbols on the slabs which closed the graves, e. g. the anchor or the palm, and the presence of a vase near a sepulchre (supposed to have been filled with the martyr's blood collected at the moment of the execution) indicated that the tomb belonged to a martyr.

The bones found in these tombs were therefore removed, and taken to various localities in Catholic countries, where they were venerated as relics of the "saints of the catacombs.". This conception is false and based on mistaken theories, since it can be confidently asserted that the remains of no true martyr have ever been found in the catacombs after the translations of the ninth century, with the solitary exception of the relics of St. Hyacinth in the catacomb of St. Hermes.

Since these researches were carried on without any scientific object in view, many monuments were

destroyed without having any archaeological description made of them, while others, chiefly inscriptions and paintings, were published more or less incorrectly by Marc' Antonio Boldetti in his *Osservazioni sopra i cimiteri de' santi martiri ed antichi cristiani di Roma*, vol. in 4^o Roma 1720. The aim of this author was mainly apologetic, in accordance with the ideas current in his time.

Other groups of iconographic monuments found in the ancient Christian cemeteries were published separately, e. g. the *Sculture e pitture sagre estratte dai cimiteri di Roma* by Giovanni Bottari (3 vols. Roma 1737-1754), and the gilt glasses by Filippo Buonaroti: *Osservazioni sopra alcuni frammenti di vasi antichi di vetro ornati con figure trovati ne' cimiteri di Roma* (Firenze 1716).

The publications relating to Christian inscriptions from the catacombs were more numerous during the eighteenth century. Among these works are the following: Raph. Fabretti, *Inscriptionum antiquarum quae in aedibus paternis asservantur explicatio* (Romae 1702); Ant. Maria Lupi, *Dissertatio et animadversiones ad nuper inventum Severae martyris epitaphium* (Panormi 1734); Joan. Marangoni, *Acta S. Victorini episcopi Amiterni et martyris illustrata* (Romae 1740), with an appendix relating to the cemetery of SS. Thrasen and Saturninus, just then discovered. By the same author "*Delle cose gentilesche e profane trasportate ad uso e ornamento delle chiese* (Roma 1744). The collections of ancient inscriptions published during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by various authors also contain Christian epigraphical monuments.

J. J. Winckelmann (d. 1768) and his school introduced a new era in the study of classical archaeology. This encouraged a more scientific approach to the Christian monuments also, though little was done in this respect prior to the first decades of the nineteenth century, and the Roman catacombs derived little benefit from it. Apart from the architectonic and iconographical monuments, there were only epigraphic texts, which were studied separately by a few scientists.

The first archaeologist to take up seriously the study of the Roman subterranean cemeteries was Father Marchi S. J., who began a large work on the ancient Roman Christian monuments, of which however only the first volume was published: *Monumenti delle arti cristiane primitive nella metropoli del cristianesimo — p. 1^a — Architettura della Roma sotterranea*, Roma 1844. Father Marchi, in his explorations underground, was often accompanied by a young law student, Giovanni Battista de Rossi (born 23 Feb. 1822, died 20 Sept. 1894), who afterwards dedicated the greater part of his scientific activity to Christian archaeology. Possessed of the finest qualities both of mind and heart, he may be considered the founder of the scientific method in critical research as applied to the monuments of ancient Christianity.

With the work of this consummate Roman scientist the systematic study of the Roman catacombs and of their monuments was taken up once more. In his immortal works: *Roma sotterranea cristiana* (3 vols., Roma 1864–1877), *Inscriptiones christianae urbis Romae septimo saeculo antiquiores* (2 vols., Roma 1861–1888), and in numerous articles in his *Bullettino di Archeologia*

cristiana (1863-1894) concerning the discoveries in the Roman catacombs, he has described some of the most important Christian cemeteries and indicated the lines on which these studies should eventually be developed.

On the initiative of Gio. Battista de Rossi and under his direction, systematic excavations were carried out in several of the underground cemeteries of Rome, and the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology was founded by Pope Pius IX, who was an ardent supporter of De Rossi's studies. This commission has secured the continuation of the work in the catacombs.

Various publications by followers of the great De Rossi deal with the ancient cemeteries, among whom may be mentioned the late M. Armellini, Henry Stevenson, and Orazio Marucchi. Also the *Nuovo Bullettino di archeologia cristiana*, a continuation of G. B. de Rossi's periodical, and the *Rivista di Archeologia cristiana*, published jointly by the Pontifical Commission of Sacred Archaeology, and the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology continue this series of periodical publications.

With the foundation of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology, erected in the Holy Year 1925 by Pope Pius XI, a centre was established for the scientific study of the highly important monuments preserved in the catacombs of Rome.

V. EARLY SOURCES FOR THE HISTORY OF THE CATACOMBS.

The scientific criteria for the historical survey of a catacomb and for the determination of the chronological development of its various regions, are furnished chiefly

by the monument itself. These may be exact chronological indications, such as sepulchral inscriptions in situ with consular date or containing other chronological matter, tombs of historical people, e. g. popes or bishops, objects found in the tombs or fixed as decoration in the wall close by, or the absence, in a region, of the monogram of Christ used as a symbol (this being a sure sign of a period anterior to Constantine, given the frequency of this symbol in every type of monument from his time onward). Other indications of a less precise nature may be derived from a study of the paintings, e. g. peculiarities of style and composition, and choice of subjects. The inscriptions also provide further evidence of an indirect nature by their formulae, palaeography and linguistic peculiarities. A sound comparative study of all these elements will establish the relative periods of the various regions of a catacomb, and even their precise date of origin in their primitive form. In these researches it is of prime importance to find the spot where the first subterranean chambers had their origin, and then by means of a technical study to discover how far the subsequent enlargements reached.

In the Roman catacombs the starting points for these researches, both topographical and chronological, are furnished by those martyr tombs of which we have certain knowledge. The primitive tomb of a martyr fixes the latest possible date for the part of a catacomb where it is found, at the opening of the fourth century, viz. the persecution of Diocletian. When both the name of the martyr and also the persecution in which he suffered are known, the date is fixed in the most

positive manner. These chronological data when once they are established, afford a sound basis for the study of the origin and history of the region where the martyr's tomb is found.

The history of the cult which arose around the shrines of these heroes shows clearly what are the criteria to be adopted for the identification of a martyr's tomb: a clearing made all round it, decorations of the fourth and following centuries, new stairs of access, graffiti of pious visitors to the sanctuary, marble slabs with Damasian epigrams in Philocalian lettering: all these and similar particulars exhibit in an unmistakeable manner the veneration in which a shrine was held at a time when subterranean burial had already fallen into disuse. From this emerges the great importance of the ancient sources which give the names of the martyrs venerated in the various cemeteries of Rome. Among these sources two are particularly important; viz. the most ancient Roman liturgical calendars, giving the topographical indications of the martyrs' tombs; and the seventh century Itineraries compiled as guides for the pilgrims in their visits to these shrines along the ancient roads leading out of the city. There are three versions of these Itineraries, the most exact being that preserved in a codex of Salzburg.

Besides the itineraries there is a list of martyrs made by the abbot John at the beginning of the seventh century to accompany a set of small phials containing a few drops of oil taken from the lamps burning at their tombs. These phials are still preserved at Monza. Other topographical notices can be derived from the legendary accounts of the *Passiones* of the

Roman martyrs, which are correct as regards the period in which the legends were compiled.

Another important category of topographical sources consists of ancient texts which give precise information as to the topography of the cemeteries, with the basilicas and other edifices erected around the primitive tombs of the martyrs. The most important of these sources are an ancient catalogue of the Christian cemeteries of Rome, which unfortunately is not complete; a description of the city of Rome which also notes the sanctuaries along the roads outside the Aurelian walls, and which is preserved in a codex of the monastery of Einsiedeln (Switzerland); and the notices respecting the building and restoration of basilicas and other sacred edifices in the cemeteries in honour of the martyrs' tombs, which are supplied by the Papal biographies in the *Liber Pontificalis*.

All these sources help us to identify the numerous groups of martyrs' tombs, and churches of various types erected in their honour, over the catacombs surrounding Rome, from the fourth century onwards, tombs which were venerated by pilgrims from all the countries of Christendom until the ninth century. The following is a short selection from these topographical texts:

A) *THE ROMAN CALENDAR (DEPOSITIO MARTYRUM)*

of the liturgical Feasts of the fourth century.

Lietzmann's edition, *Die drei ältesten Martyrologien* (kleine Texte 2) Bonn 1911.

25 December Birth of Christ in Bethlehem of Judea.

In the month of January

- 20 January Fabianus in the cemetery of Calixtus and Sebastian in the cemetery "in Catacumbas",.
- 21 January Agnes on the via Nomentana.

In the month of February

- 22 February Feast of the Chair of Peter.

In the month of March

- 7 March Perpetua and Felicita in Africa

In the month of May

- 19 May Parthenius and Calocerus in the Cemetery of Calixtus under the consulate of Diocletian IX and Maximianus VIII (304).

In the month of June

- 29 June Peter "in Catacumbas," and Paul on the via Ostiense under the consulate of Tuscus and Bassus (258).

In the month of July

- 10 July Felix and Philip in the cemetery of Priscilla; Martial, Vitalis and Alexander in the cemetery of the Jordani, and Silanus in the cemetery of Maximus — this martyr Silanus was stolen by the Novatians — and Januarius in the cemetery of Pretextatus.
- 30 July Abdos and Semnes in the cemetery of Pontianus near the "capped bear",.

In the month of August

- 6 August Sixtus in the cemetery of Calixtus, and Agapitus and Felicissimus in the cemetery of Praetextatus.

- 8 August** Secundus, Carpoфорus, Victorinus and Severianus at Albano, and on the via Ostiense at the seventh mile "balistaria," Cyriacus, Largus, Crescentianus Memmius, Julianus and Smaragdus.
- 10 August** Laurence on the via Tiburtina.
- 13 August** Hippolytus on the via Tiburtina and Pontianus in the cemetery of Calixtus.
- 22 August** Timotheus on the via Ostiense.
- 28 August** Hermete in the cemetery of Basilla on the Via Salaria Vetus.

In the month of September

- 5 September** Accontius at Porto, and Nonnus and Herculani and Taurinus.
- 9 September** Gorgonius on the via Labicana.
- 11 September** Protus and Hyacinthus in the cemetery of Basilla.
- 14 September** Cyprian in Africa — At Rome the feast is celebrated in the cemetery of Calixtus.
- 22 September** Basilla on the via Salaria Vetus, under the consulate of Diocletian IX and Maximianus VIII (= 304).

In the month of October

- 14 October** Calixtus on the via Aurelia at the third mile.

In the month of November

- 9 November** Clement, Sempronianus, Claudius, Nicostratus in the "Comitatus," (= Imperial villa?).
- 29 November** Saturninus in the cemetery of Thrason.

In the month of December

- 13 December** Ariston at Porto.

B) THE ANCIENT CATALOGUE OF THE ROMAN CEMETERIES.

Edited by Mons. P. Guidi, *Catalogo dei Cimiteri di Roma* (Atti della Pont. Accad. Rom. di Arch. sec. III, Rendiconti vol. I), Roma 1923.

Cemetery of Priscilla at S. Sylvester on the via Salaria — Cemetery of the Jordani at S. Alexander on the via Salaria — Cemetery of Thrason at S. Saturninus on the via Salaria — Cemetery at The Two Laurels at SS. Peter and Marcellinus on the via Labicana — Cemetery of Apronianus at S. Eugenia on the via Latina — Cemetery of Pretextatus at S. Januarius on the via Appia — Cemetery *Ad Catacumbas* at S. Sebastian on the via Appia — Cemetery of Calixtus at S. Sixtus on the via Appia — Cemetery of Domitilla at SS. Nereus and Achilleus and at S. Petronilla on the via Ardeatina — Cemetery of Balbina at S. Mark on the via Ardeatina — Cemetery of Basileus at SS. Mark and Marcellianus on the via Ardeatina (1). — Cemetery of Commodilla at SS. Felix and Adauctus on the via Ostiense — Cemetery "Ad Insalatos (insalsatos, inmphalatos)," at S. Felix on the via Portuense — Cemetery of Pontianus "at the Capped Bear," (Ad Ursum pileatum) at SS. Abdos and Sennes on the via Portuense — Cemetery of Calepodius at S. Calixtus on the via Aurelia — Cemetery at the Seven Doves and S. John's Head on the Watermelon Hill — Cemetery of Basilla at S. Hermete on the via Salaria Vetus.

Besides the cemeteries named in the above list, the ancient sources of the fourth to the eighth centuries mention also the following:

On the via Salaria Vetus: the Cemetery of S. Pamphilus — On the via Salaria Nova: the Cemetery of Maximus or of S. Felicita — On the via Nomentana: the Cemetery of S. Agnes, the Major Cemetery and the Cemetery of S. Nicomedes — On the via Tiburtina: the Cemetery of S. Laurence and the Cemetery of S. Hippolytus — On the via Labicana: the Cemetery of S. Castulus — On the via Latina:

(1) These two cemeteries of Balbina and Basileus are confounded in the text of the Catalogue.

the Cemetery of S. Gordianus with the tombs of several other martyrs: the Cemetery of S. Tertullinus — On the via Appia, close to the Catacombs of Calixtus: the Cemetery of S. Soteris — On the via Ostiense: the sepulchral Church of S. Timotheus, and that of S. Thekla — On the via Aurelia: the Cemetery of S. Pancras; the Cemetery of SS. Processus and Martinianus; the Cemetery of the two Felixes — On the via Flaminia: the Cemetery of S. Valentine.

These catacombs were close to the city, within a radius of two to three kilometres from the gates. The following however, although they are farther away must still be considered as belonging to Rome because they were visited from there:

The Cemetery of SS. Eventius, Alexander and Theodolus on the via Nomentana — The Cemetery of S. Symphorosa on the via Tiburtina — The Cemetery of S. Zoticus on the via Labicana — The Cemetery of SS. Simplicius, Faustinus and Viatrix on the via Portuense.

c) *EXTRACT FROM THE ITINERARY OF SALZBURG*
referring to the Sanctuaries of the Martyrs on the via Appia
and the via Ardeatina.

Edited by G. B. De Rossi, *Roma Sotterranea Cristiana*, vol. I, (Roma 1864), pp. 128-180 (V. figs. 14 and 15).

From here thou proceedest to the via Appia to the martyr Sebastian whose body lies in an underground chamber, and there are the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul wherein they reposed for forty years, and in the western part of the church thou descendest some steps to the spot where lies the holy bishop and martyr Cyrinus, and along the same road towards the north thou arrivest at the holy martyrs Tiburtius, Valerianus and Maximus. There descending into a great grotto thou will find the holy Urban bishop and confessor, and in another place the martyrs Felicissimus and Agapitus deacons of Pope Sixtus, and in a third place the martyr Quirinus and in a fourth the martyr Januarius, and in a third church above rests the holy martyr

Synon. Proceeding along the same road thou comest to S. Cecilia, there lies an innumerable multitude of martyrs. In the first place Sixtus, Pope and martyr, then Dionysius Pope and martyr, Julianus bishop and martyr, Flavianus martyr, S. Cecilia virgin and martyr, eighty martyrs lie deep below; Zephyrinus Pope and confessor rests above ground. Eusebius Pope and martyr is farther away in a crypt, Cornelius Pope and martyr rests far away in another crypt. After this thou reachest S. Soteris virgin and martyr, whose body lies to the north. (On the same road thou arrivest at a small church on the spot where Pope Sixtus was decapitated with his deacons). And thou departest from the via Appia and reachest S. Marcus Pope and martyr, then to S. Damasus Pope and martyr (sic) on the via Ardeatina and there thou findest in another church the two deacons and martyrs Marcus and Marcellianus, brothers, the body of this last lies above ground under a great altar. Thou then descendest some steps to the holy martyrs Nereus and Achilleus.

PART II

PART 2. THE INDIVIDUAL CATACOMBS

The underground Christian cemeteries of Rome having become the normal place of sepulture for the whole Christian community, these developed to an enormous extent during the period from the second to the fourth century, so that a large number of great catacombs came into existence along all the consular roads outside the walls of Rome. By the fourth century these had all become the property of the Roman Christian community, and were administered by the clergy under the superintendence of the bishop of Rome. They fall naturally into groups, depending on the direction taken by the great roads.

FIRST GROUP

CEMETERIES ON THE NORTH OF THE CITY OF ROME

The chief group to the north lies along the two *vie Salaria*, the *Vetus* and the *Nova*, and the neighbouring *via Nomentana*. Here we have no less than nine great subterranean cemeteries, in almost all of which were honoured tombs of Roman martyrs. Another road on this side, the nearest to the Tiber, viz the *via Flaminia*, boasted only one shrine, that of S. Valentine.

Via Flaminia

I. THE CEMETERY OF S. VALENTINE

This cemetery is situated at the foot of the rocky hill where the modern Viale dei Monti Parioli branches off on the right of the Via Flaminia. It appears to have



Fig. 11 — Cemetery of S. Valentine — Entrance gallery.

been originally an immense outdoor cemetery formed around the basilica erected on this spot by Pope

Julius I (337-352) in honour of S. Valentine, martyred and perhaps also buried in Rome, but bishop of Terni, his feast being celebrated both in Rome, in this basilica, and at Terni, on 14 February.

Here are still to be seen the remains of the basilica with a crypt under the choir, and also many monu-



Fig. 12 — Cemetery of S. Valentine — Gallery with inscriptions.

ments, in the shape of sculptures belonging to sarcophagi and inscriptions. The latter are kept in a small

catacomb excavated in the rock, close to the basilica and at a higher level. The catacomb consisted of several galleries excavated in a regular manner, the nearest of which to the entrance was enlarged later on so as to form a subterranean chapel (fig. 11), and was decorated with paintings in the seventh century, of which only scanty traces remain. The relation between this chapel and the basilica and cult of S. Valentine has not yet been determined. The lower parts of the cemeterial galleries have been destroyed in order to convert them into wine cellars. Some of the inscriptions (fig. 12) from the outdoor cemetery give consular dates and have special formulas. There is also a fine sarcophagus on which, among others, are scenes from the life of S. Peter.

Via Salaria vetus

2. THE CEMETERY “AD CLIVUM CUCUMERIS,” OR “AD SEPTEM PALUMBAS,”

This catacomb, the first on the *Via Salaria Vetus* to be reached by the pilgrims coming from the sanctuary of S. Valentine, has not yet been found. From the large group of martyrs mentioned by the ancient Itineraries as being deposited here, it would appear to have been an important underground cemetery with a large cemeterial basilica in honour of the saints venerated at this spot. But although various researches have been made along the *Via Salaria Vetus*, on the Parioli hills

between the cemetery of S. Hermes and the valley of the Acqua Acetosa, no certain traces of any cemetery have been discovered.

3. THE CEMETERY OF BASILLA AT S. HERMES

This vast subterranean cemetery situated close to the modern Via Bertoloni, is the second in the group of the Salaria Vetus. Within its galleries, which as yet are mostly unexplored, there are two historical martyr shrines. One of these consists of a large subterranean chapel constructed on the second floor of the catacomb, while its unusually high vault reaches the level of the ground above. It has thick brick walls, the vault being supported by pilasters, and terminates in an apse with a rectangular niche for the episcopal chair. This subterranean church, one of the most monumental constructions in the Roman catacombs, was probably erected for the tomb of S. Hermes, one of the martyrs buried in this cemetery, but the tomb of S. Basilla seems also to have been near by. This S. Basilla was a martyr under Diocletian, and is to be distinguished from the foundress of this cemetery, to which her name was given. Here there are fragments of a cornice with the name (H) ERMES in Dămasian characters. The other shrine is to be found in another region of the catacomb at some distance from this church, and consists of a small unassuming crypt in which were buried the two martyrs Protus and Hyacinthus. Here in 1845 the Rev. Father Marchi S. J. discovered the tomb of S. Hyacinth,

still intact and closed by a marble slab on which was inscribed :

DP III IDVS SEPTEMBR
YACINTHVS
MARTYR

When the slab was removed, a square niche was seen, cut in the tufa behind, it contained ashes and fragments of burnt bones wrapped up in the remains of woven material in which were threads of gold. This is the only tomb of a Roman martyr which has ever been found intact in the catacombs since the great translations of the ninth century, at which time the sepulchre of S. Hyacinth was evidently not found owing to its having become hidden under the earth which had accumulated on the floor, since it was in the lowest row of loculi. Some inscriptions of the end of the fourth and fifth centuries have recently come to light, one of them being an epigraphical text alluding to works carried out in the shrine of the saints. The crypts and neighbouring galleries have been restored in their original form.

Among the cemeterial paintings discovered in the catacomb are some rather rare scenes of the third and fourth centuries, such as a judgment scene in which Christ, seated on a raised throne, places His right hand in sign of protection on the head of the defunct, in the attitude of an orante. Two saints on the right and left respectively, plead the cause of the latter. Over the arch of a sepulchral niche are painted the twelve apostles with Christ in the centre, all seated on separate thrones. Other decorations, including a mosaic over an arcosolium, represent Biblical scenes.

4. THE CEMETERY OF S. PAMPHILUS

The third great cemetery of the *Via Salaria Vetus*, which is on the exact spot indicated by the ancient itineraries for the sanctuary of the martyr S. Pamphilus, was discovered in Feb. 1920 close to the *via Giovanni Paisiello*, in which is the modern entrance. It contains two vast principal floors, with a smaller intermediate floor, the lowest floor being 19 metres below the modern street level.

This catacomb is noteworthy for the large number of intact galleries it contains (fig. 13). These are very high, their original level having been considerably deepened, and they still contain many intact loculi decorated with various objects (glass vases, ivories, gilt glasses, coins etc.) stuck firmly in the cement with which the loculi are sealed.

The parts of the central region already excavated, as also the primitive stairs, belong to the third cent., according to the chronological criteria set forth above. This date is confirmed by the presence of a historic cubiculum discovered on the second floor, (fig. 14) where there is the tomb of a martyr in a gallery parallel to the primitive artery with the entrance stair. This cubiculum consists of two chambers (*cubiculum duplex*), and the martyr's tomb is in a high *arcosolium* at the end of the second chamber. The slab of marble which closed the sepulchre under the arch of the *arcosolium*, is still in its place. The relics of the saint must have been removed through a hole in the wall of the *arcosolium*.

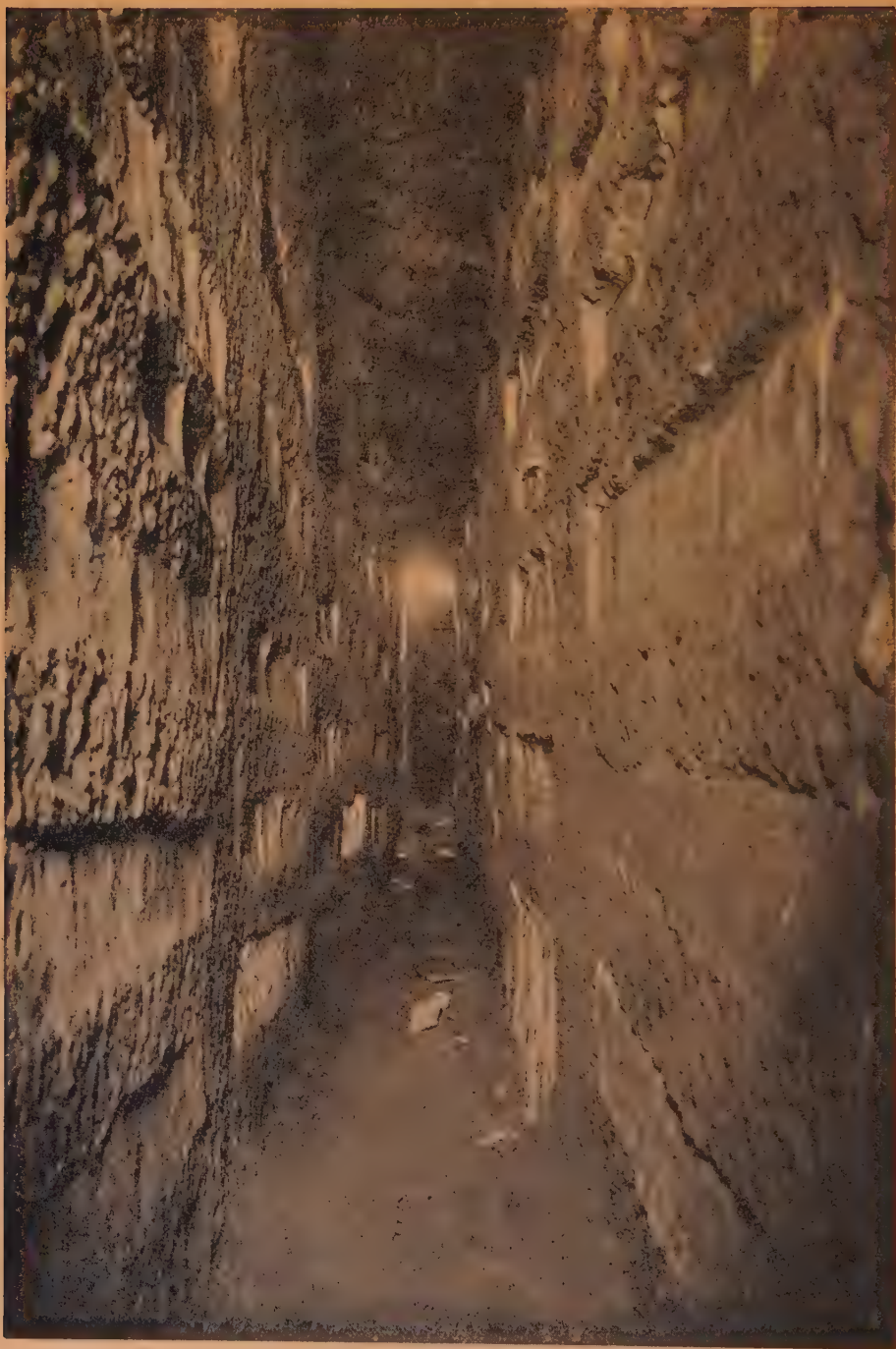


Fig. 13 — Cemetery of Pamphilus — Gallery with intact loculi.

Against this wall and right in the middle, an altar was constructed of masonry faced with porphyry, in the fifth or sixth century. A niche was made in the solid



Fig. 14 — Cemetery of Pamphilus - *Cubiculum duplex* of the martyr.

masonry of the altar, probably to place objects in, which were subsequently taken away and treated as precious relics (fig. 15).

The walls of the niche are faced with marble. On the right wall of the cubiculum there is a deep arcosolium excavated on the level of the floor, and on the right and left of the tomb are two small cathedrae cut

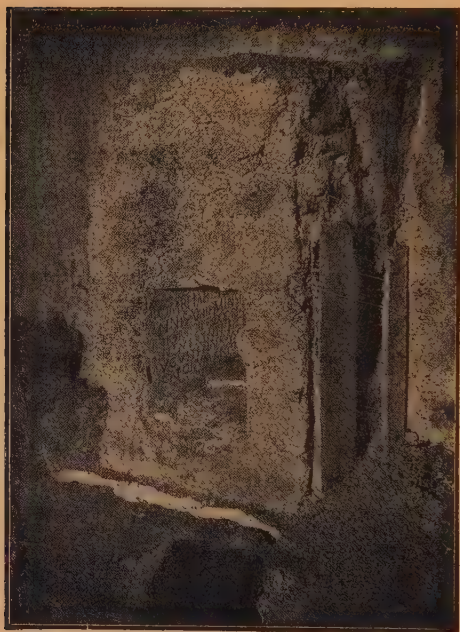


Fig. 15 — Cemetery
of Pamphilus - Altar of the
martyr's crypt.

out of the tufa. The place was restored in later times, and on the walls are many graffiti made by pious visitors to the tomb of the martyr. The floor was occupied by graves (formae), and on the slab of one of these is preserved the inscription in black paint of the defunct *Provincius*:

PROVINCI
SPIRITVS
IN BONO

In the transverse gallery leading from the primitive artery to the cubiculum of the martyr a small niche

for a lamp can still be seen. At the back of the niche there was a painting of the bust of the Madonna with the Divine Child of the sixth cent. (fig. 16). Outside and above the niche there was a border of white plaster

Fig. 16 — Cemetery of
Pamphilus — The destroyed
Madonna.



with an inscription, of which only a few letters are visible, both the inscription and the picture having been barbarously destroyed.

Some of the crypts are interesting on account of their architectonic structure. In one of these, on the first floor, the roof is supported by four isolated masonry pillars in the four corners of the chamber. Another cubiculum is decorated with paintings which completely cover the walls and ceiling. In two of the panels of this decoration are the figures of Noah and of the Good Shepherd; in others are peacocks and allegories of the Seasons. Some pictures of Bible scenes are also preserved in other parts of the catacomb.

Many intact loculi are closed with masonry, the inscriptions being painted in black or red on the plaster which covers the closures. In other loculi this arrang-

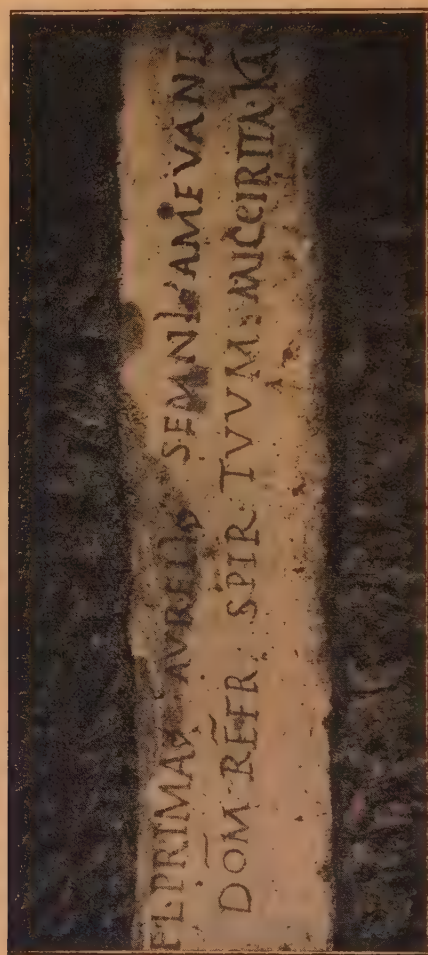


Fig. 17 — Cemetery of Pamphilus — Inscription of Fl. Prima Amevania.

ment is replaced by slabs of marble, on which the epitaphs were frequently carved. We give a few examples of those which are of special interest as regards text or symbols.

AFRODISIVS · NARCISANA · COSTANTIA
FRATRI IN PACE

fish



fish

The sister Narcisana Costantia to the brother Afrodisius in peace.

FL · PRIMA · AVRELI · SEMNI AMEVANIA
DOM̄ · REFR · SP̄IR · TVVM · MICCIRITA · KARA ·

Flavia Prima Amevania wife of Aurelius Semnus. May the Lord refresh thy soul dear Miccirita (fig. 17).

APRONIANETI · FILIAE · DVLCISSIME
QVAE · VIXIT · ANN · V MENS · V ·
PARENTES · BENE · MERENTI · POSVERVNT
APRONIANE · CREDEDISTI · IN · DEO · VIVES · IN · X̄P̄.

To Aproniane, most sweet daughter, who lived five years and five months, the parents have prepared (the sepulchre) to the well deserving one. Aproniane, thou hast believed in God, thou shalt live in Christ!

Two other inscriptions are of interest on account of the technique of their execution. The first belongs to a loculus closed with three tiles, to one of which is attached the following inscription in mosaic:

MARTIRES
SANCTI BONI
BENEDICTI BOS
ATIVTATE QVIRACV

Martyres sancti boni benedicti (v)os a(d)iu(v)ate Quir(i)acu(m). Holy, good, blessed martyrs, aid Quiriacus (fig. 18).

The other, which belongs to the martyr crypt already described, is on a large slab of marble in which



Fig. 18 — Cemetery of Pamphilus — Inscription to the holy martyrs.

the letters have been hollowed out and then incrustated with narrow flakes of red porphyry. It reads as follows:

IN DEO PATRE OMNIPOTENTE FECIT
VITALIO LIBERTVS VNVM CVM QVOD
VVLT DEVS DOMINO SVO TAEOFILO
ET DOMINAE PONTIANETI MERENTIBVS
IN REFRIGERIVM



Fig. 19 — Cemetery of Pamphilus — Inscription of Vitalio and Quodvultdeus.

In God the Father Almighty Vitalio a freedman made (the tomb) one with Quod vult Deus to his lord Teofilus and to the lady Pontianete well deserving in refreshment (fig. 19).

Via Salaria Nuova

5. THE CEMETERY OF MAXIMUS AT S. FELICITA

The cemetery of Pamphilus on the Via Salaria Vetus was that nearest to the walls of Rome. From this cemetery the pilgrims passed to the Via Salaria Nova, on which road they would first reach the cemetery of Maximus, that being the nearest to the Porta Salaria. There were three other great cemeteries along this road. All these catacombs are known, but are only partially excavated.

Only a small region of the cemetery of Maximus is preserved, including the subterranean chapel where the tomb of S. Sylvanus (Silanus) was venerated in early times. Sylvanus was one of the seven martyrs whose feast was celebrated on 10 July, and who were represented in a later legend as sons of S. Felicitia. The subterranean chamber, which has its entrance in the Via Simeto, is a rectangular hall ending in a narrower choir. On the tufa wall at the end are the remains of a seventh century painting representing Christ on high giving the crowns of eternal life to S. Felicitia and the seven martyrs of 10 July, who are represented in the legend as her sons. The names written at the heads of the martyrs, who are arranged in a row under the figure of the Redeemer, leave no doubt as to the character of the scene. At some distance from this wall in the axis of the hall and at the entrance to the choir, is preserved in the floor the lower part of a block of tufa. This probably belonged to the tomb of Sylvanus, and the underground chapel

was made in its original form by Pope Boniface I (418-422) as a shrine for this venerated sepulchre. He erected a basilica above ground over the tomb of S. Felicita, who was buried in the outdoor cemetery, and perhaps it was at the same time that he made the underground chapel for the tomb of S. Sylvanus, communicating with the basilica above by its own stair. At a later period the underground sanctuary was restored and decorated, as can be seen by the construction of the wall at the end, and the frescoes painted upon it. It was probably the fact of the tombs of S. Sylvanus and S. Felicita being so close together that led to the legend that the whole group of martyrs of 10 July were sons of the latter saint, whose own feast was celebrated at a different date.

6. THE CEMETERY OF THRASON AT S. SATURNINUS

This catacomb, discovered at the beginning of the eighteenth century, is about half a kilometre away from that of Maximus, its present entrance being on the right of the Salaria close to Via Taro. Its principal region however is on the left of the road, under part of the grounds of the Villa Savoia. It consists of a vast network of regular subterranean galleries with crypts, and one of its chief arteries continues in a straight line for more than 100 metres. There are several tombs with paintings, one of these represents the unusual subject of a winner in the circus races, who was evidently a Christian.

Regular excavations have been made here only at one spot where the ground had given way, and have opened up a small region which is of particular interest

from the architecture of the sepulchral chambers, some tombs decorated with coloured plates, and a group of inscriptions belonging to the third century. The cemetery consequently existed and was already considerably developed at that period. No trace has been found of the tombs of the martyrs venerated here, among which was that of S. Saturninus in his cemeterial basilica, and that of the saints Chrysanthus and Daria which appears to have been enclosed by transennae in an underground crypt.

7. THE CEMETERY OF THE JORDANI

The third great cemetery on the Via Salaria Nuova is that of the Jordani (Jordanorum), discovered in 1578, and once more completely lost a few years later, so that Antonio Bosio was unable to find the monuments discovered so short a time before. It was accidentally discovered in 1921, when the foundations were being laid for some buildings on the right of the Via Salaria, at the corner of the Via Anapo. The preservation of the region under this area was then ensured, but it was not possible to carry out regular excavations.

The fine cemeterial paintings discovered in the sixteenth century are fortunately still in a good state of preservation, and most of the frescoes seen by Ciaccio and others have been found. Of the eleven burial places of various forms described by Bosio (cubicula with arcosolia, and high arched recesses reaching to the ground), only two have yet to be rediscovered, the other nine have returned to the light with all their rich decoration almost intact (fig. 20).

Besides various purely decorative designs there are many Biblical scenes taken from both the Old and New



Fig. 20 — Cemetery of the Jordani - Gallery with sepulchral niches.

Testaments: Noah in the ark (fig. 21), Daniel and the lions, Moses striking the rock (fig. 22), the cycle of Jonah (figs. 23-24), the sacrifice of Abraham (fig. 25),

the Three Children in the furnace, the raising of Lazarus, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves. Also the figures of the Good Shepherd and the Orante



Fig. 21 — Cemetery of the Jordani — Noah in the ark.

(fig. 26), and the group of Jesus Christ in the midst of the twelve apostles. Some of the scenes show interesting peculiarities of composition, and among those that are purely decorative is a hunting scene, which

is very rare. All these paintings go back to the second half of the third century, as can be deduced with certainty from the chronological criteria supplied by the region and its monuments.

The reproduction of Christian Biblical scenes originates at the beginning of the second century, as is



Fig 22 — Cemetery of the Jordani — Moses bringing water out of the rock in the desert.

proved by the monuments of the catacombs of Domitilla and Priscilla. The Christians adopted the rich elements of contemporary ornamental art, and followed the artistic conceptions, method of composition, and technique of colouring and design which were in use in their time. They also appropriated some subjects which were

common in profane art, e. g. Orpheus, and the allegorical figures of the Seasons, attributing to them however a Christian religious significance. Quite early however, in

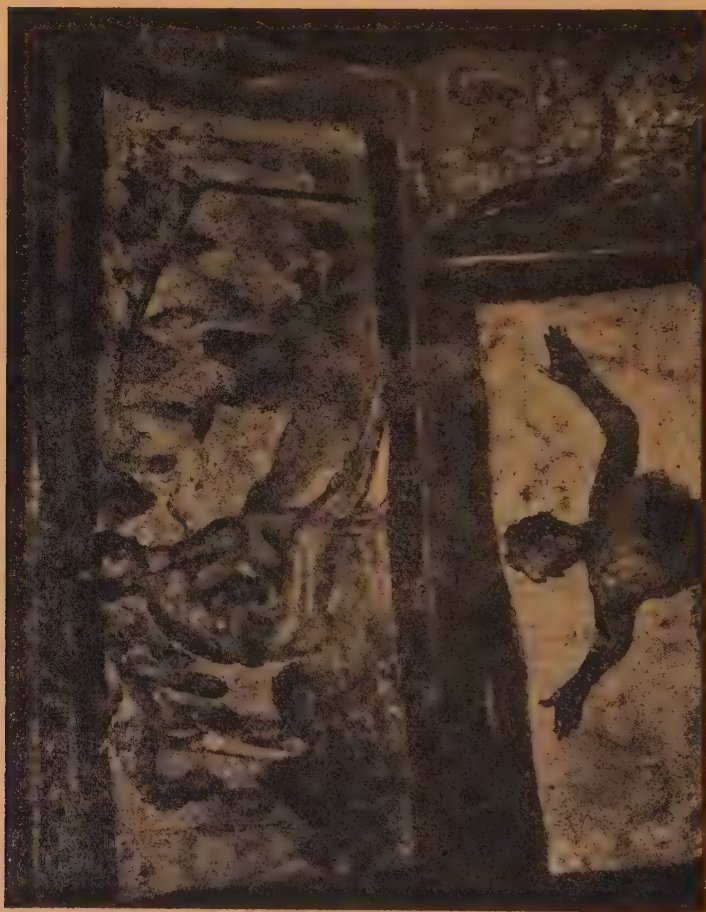


Fig. 23 — Cemetery of the Jordani — Jonah under the gourd,
and Daniel in the lions' den.

the post apostolic period, viz the beginning of the second century, the Christian artists began to create new compositions, the subjects of which were completely

derived from the Christian religion, getting their inspiration from the Holy Scriptures as they were expounded



Fig 24 — Cemetery of the Jordani -
Jonah cast into the sea.

to the believers by their ecclesiastical teachers, the bishops and presbyters. The formal composition and the artistic execution are derived from contemporary

profane art, but the conceptions which gave origin to the iconographical creations are new, and they are Christian.



Fig. 25 — Cemetery of the Jordani - The sacrifice of Abraham.

The creative idea which inspired the choice and composition of the scenes was naturally in relation to the nature of the monuments, to be decorated, viz

sepulchral monuments. The most ancient group of scenes of the Old Testament represented in the second



Fig. 26 — Cemetery of the Jordani — Woman orante.

and the beginning of the third centuries, remained in use also during the succeeding period, and included the following subjects: Noah in the ark, with the dove

bringing him the olive branch; Daniel in the position of an orante between two lions; Moses bringing forth water out of the rock with his rod; the three young Hebrews in the midst of the flaming furnace; the cycle of scenes from the story of the prophet Jonah, in which he is cast into the sea, thrown up by the marine monster, and rests under the gourd.

Besides these pictures which are the most frequent, the following are also found during the same period: the sacrifice of Abraham, who prepares to slay his son Isaac; the chaste Susannah saved by Daniel after the false accusations of the elders; also David with his sling, ready to slay Goliath, Tobias with the fish, and Job in his misery: but these subjects are rarer, and some of them do not appear till the third century.

The choice of these scenes was evidently based on a uniform concept, since they all represent facts which illustrate the miraculous interposition of God to save His own from great perils. If this fundamental notion is placed in direct relation with the sepulchral character of the monuments, the conclusion is reached that the scenes represented are the expression of the sure Christian hope that the faithful dead buried in these subterranean chambers, will be saved like the righteous in the Old Testament by the mercy and omnipotence of God from all the dangers prepared by their enemies, and will thus enter into the peace of His kingdom in heaven.

The New Testament scenes represented in the most ancient cemeterial paintings of the second and the first half of the third centuries, fall into two separate groups. The first group includes a series of miracles

worked by Jesus Christ for the terrestrial salvation of men. Here is found in the first place the raising of Lazarus, so naturally appropriate for the decoration of a Christian tomb, as indicating the faith of the defunct in a glorious resurrection. A little later appear the scenes of the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, the man born blind, the leper, and the more frequent one of the paralytic, who strides away healed, carrying his bed on his shoulders.

These miracles express both faith and hope, that the defunct, set free from spiritual evil by the all powerful protection of God, will be received into the joy of the celestial kingdom prepared for them by their Saviour. This hope finds however its most frequent expression in the figure of the Good Shepherd, with the sheep on his shoulder and his flock around him, which appears during the first half of the second century, and is so constantly repeated in cemeterial paintings and other monuments, that it may be considered the commonest and most typical representation of Jesus Christ in ancient Christian art. On sepulchral monuments, the Good Shepherd according to the teaching of both the Old and New Testaments, is the iconographical expression of the Christian idea that Jesus is the true pastor of His faithful followers, gathering them into the flock of His elect in heaven, where they will find eternal refreshment.

The second group of ancient compositions taken from the Gospels, consists of scenes illustrating the manifestation of the Saviour in the world, such as the adoration of the Magi; and His work for the salvation of man, represented symbolically by Christ's conversation

with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, and the miracle of Cana. (It is to be noted that the rod which is invariably placed in the hand of Christ in the latter examples, is the symbol of the miracle worker). Examples of these scenes are found in various catacombs.

In this way primitive Christian art created a rich cycle of new artistic compositions for the decoration of sepulchral monuments, during the period between circ. 100 and circ. 250 A. D., exclusively inspired by the new Christian doctrines, and illustrating the supernatural salvation brought by the Divine Saviour to mankind. These compositions were repeated during the following period, from 250 to 400 A. D., and a most interesting group of them, all painted during the second half of the third century, is preserved in the catacomb of the Jordani.

During the work of clearing the excavated region many inscriptions were found, mostly in a fragmentary condition. Among those intact are the following:

GREGORIO PHOEBO IN REFRIGERIO
QVI · VIXIT · ANNIS · II · MENS · VIII · DIEB · XIII
PHOEBVS · ET FESTA · PARENTES FECERVNT
QVI LEGITIS IN MENTE HABETOTE

To Gregorius Phoebus in (a place of) refreshment, who lived two years, eight months, thirteen days. Phoebus and Festa his parents have made (the tomb). You who read, remember (the defunct).

C · VENVLEIO · AGLAO EVCOSMI
DVLGIS SPIRITVS

a text giving the triple name, a very rare formula:

To C(aius) Venuleius Aglaos, son of Encosmos, gentle soul.

AE(lius) · AVXANON · FOSOR VIVS
 LOCV · FECIT · SVIS · MANIBVS · BISOMV
 SIBI · ET · CONIVGI · SVE · CECILIE
 MARCELLE

Aelius Auxanon while living made with his hands this double locus for himself and his wife Cecilia Marcella.

8. THE CEMETERY OF PRISCILLA

The last great catacomb of the Via Salaria Nova, at about two kilometres from the gate, has its present entrance in the "Casa di Priscilla," N°. 430 Via Salaria. This catacomb is one of the most ancient Christian cemeteries of Rome; its primitive subterranean hypogaea go back to the beginning and the first half of the second century. It bears the name of its foundress, Priscilla, who was undoubtedly a noble Roman lady belonging to the senatorial family of the *Acilii Glabrones*: whose Christian branch had its sepulchral hypogaeum here, as is shown by the inscriptions found, in one of which can still be seen the name of a later Priscilla, with the appellative *clarissima*, the title of the senatorial families. Manlius Acilius Glabrio, consul in 91 A. D., was put to death by Domitian, most probably for his profession of the Christian faith, to which his descendants continued to adhere. A large property on the

left of the Via Salaria, with a country house and underground water cisterns belonged to this family.

On this spot, Priscilla, a member of the Acilian gens, made a hypogaeum for her family, and, also



Fig. 27 — Cemetery of Priscilla - Chamber with inscriptions,
in the Hypogaeum of the *Acilii*.

set apart an adjacent area to be used as a burying place by other members of the Christian community of Rome. This was the primitive nucleus of the cemetery, which had its beginnings in the early part of the

second century, and developed to such an extent during the second, third and fourth centuries, as to become one of the largest of the Roman catacombs. It consists



Fig. 28 — Cemetery of Priscilla - Cryptoporticus adjoining the "Cappella greca".

of two chief floors, of which the upper one is the most ancient, and originated in three primitive hypogaea, all created before the middle of the second century, and subsequently enlarged and maintained in use up till the

beginning of the fourth. These are the regions of the hypogaeum of the Acilii, of the so-called Cappella Greca (Greek Chapel) with its cryptoporticus and



Fig. 29 — Cemetery of Priscilla — The "Cappella greca".

adjacent chambers, and of the so-called "*arenario*" (quarry), whose wide and somewhat irregular galleries were perhaps excavated by the Christians themselves

to provide a larger burial place for the use of their poor. During the course of the third and fourth centuries other regular galleries were added to these primitive nuclei, forming new regions, and towards the end



Fig. 30 — Cemetery of Priscilla — Arch in the “Cappella greca,”
with the *Fractio Panis*.

of the third century a lower floor was excavated with a separate entrance stair of its own.

One of the most ancient regions is the hypogaeum of the Acilii. It consists of a wide L shaped gallery reached by a masonry stair, and had large sepulchral niches hollowed out in the walls. Later on table tombs made of brick with mosaic decorations were backed on to some of these. The floor of the gallery was paved with marble and the walls were lined with the same material, the ceiling being decorated with painted stars. The

gallery opens into a large chamber which probably was originally a cistern, and was subsequently appropriated for burial purposes. A narrow side passage leads into another chamber where precious marble sarcophagi can still be seen under a stair which was made there in the fourth century.

This was the imposing hypogaeum of the Christian Acilii (fig. 27), viz. of the branch of that senatorial family which descended from Manlius Acilius Glabrio. Here were found the fragments of five sepulchral inscriptions belonging to their tombs, in one of which can be clearly read the title of *clarissimus*, which pertained exclusively to members of the senate. The inscription read as follows:

M · ACILIVS · V(erus ?)

C · V ·

. . . PRISCILLA · C · (f ·)

The most noble man Manlius Acilius Verus (?)

. . . the most noble lady Priscilla

Close to the hypogaeum of the Acilii is the so-called *arenario* (quarry) consisting of several wide irregular galleries, which may have been excavated in part by the Christians. This was placed at the disposal of the Roman Christians for the burial of their dead, and here during the second and the beginning of the third century hundreds of bodies were laid in loculi cut in the walls or in graves under the floor (*formae*). Most of these were very humble people, the loculi are closed with rough tiles on which the name of the defunct is painted in red, sometimes accompanied by

the apostolic salutation "Peace be with thee", or the ancient symbols of the anchor or the palm, and somewhat later by the dove, which often has an olive branch in its beak, emblem of the eternal peace of the life beyond. A few of the tombs are closed with marble slabs on which are carved symbols and inscriptions. A large proportion of the graves are still intact.

Close to the *arenario*, on the opposite side to the hypogaeum of the Acilii, there is a large rectangular subterranean hall with a brick vault (fig. 28). Another wide gallery leads into this at right angles to it, forming a two sided cryptoporticus. Other chambers lead out of these, some of which had served as cisterns, while another had been an underground nymphaeum with niches, which must originally have been decorated with plants and fountains, affording a cool retreat during the heat of summer. All this large subterranean region was adapted to sepulchral purposes during the first half of the second century, and further extended by the addition of other chambers.

A larger chamber terminating in three niches forming a kind of choir, was probably used for liturgical gatherings with the celebration of the Eucharist. This crypt, called the *Cappella greca* (Greek chapel) from some Greek inscriptions painted on one wall, was richly decorated with Christian paintings of various Biblical scenes, both on the walls and ceiling, during the first half of the second century (fig. 29).

On the walls of the front part of the chapel, the liberation of the innocent Susannah is represented in three scenes, while over the arch on the end wall is the symbolical representation of a banquet, in which

seven persons participate. This alludes to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and also to the Last Supper. (figs. 30-31). This subject is more fully described in the chapter relating to the Catacomb of S. Calixtus.

Towards the end of the third century a second floor was excavated beneath the whole of this region at a considerable depth. It consists chiefly of a very long straight passage from which side galleries branch off



Fig. 31 — Cemetery of Priscilla - The *Fractio Panis*.

at right angles at regular intervals, providing the space for thousands of graves, made mostly during the fourth century. New galleries and chambers were excavated also on the first floor during the third and fourth centuries, in communication with the ancient *arenario*.

Among the pictures which decorate this catacomb we find the most ancient examples of a new theme, since they go back to the first half of the second century. They allude to the humanity of the Saviour, the appearance on this earth of the Son of God in



Fig. 32 — Cemetery of Priscilla - The Madonna
with the prophet Isaiah.

human flesh, and occupy their natural place on the tombs of the faithful, since the salvation brought to the



Fig. 33 — Cemetery of Priscilla — The underground reservoir.

world through the Incarnation, and received by the defunct, ensures their eternal beatitude with Christ.

In the so-called “Cappella Greca,” on the outer face of the arch, are represented the Three Kings.



Fig. 34 — Cemetery of Priscilla — The cemeterial church of S. Sylvester (rebuilt).

Mary the Mother of God is seated on a throne on the right, holding the Child to her breast, while the Three Magi approach from the left with platters in their

hands on which are placed the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, which they offer to the Infant Jesus.

In a gallery widened to form a chamber in the ancient quarry, on a corner of the vault close to the Good Shepherd, the Madonna is represented again with the prophet Isaiah. Mary is seated, and holds the Divine Child in her arms (fig. 32). In front of this group stands the prophet, holding a written roll in his left hand, while with his right hand he points to a star over Mary's head. Here the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah as the Light from on high is combined with its fulfilment. This scene has remained unique of its kind; that of the adoration of the Magi on the other hand became generally adopted to express the coming of the Saviour into the world, it occurs in many catacombs. The Annunciation of the Angel to Mary is found also painted on a ceiling in this catacomb, and again in a crypt of the catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus.

In the fourth century an underground reservoir was made at the same level as the first floor of the catacomb but independant of it, (fig. 33) to which a wide stair led down from the ground above. It was no doubt used in connection with the banquets held in memory of the departed in the outdoor cemetery. The deep grooves made by the friction of the rope used to pull up the vessels of water can still be seen on the marble edge of the cistern.

In a crypt near the hypogaeum of the Acilii was the tomb of the martyr Crescentius who suffered under Diocletian. His crypt has been identified by the numerous *graffiti* on the walls near by, in one of which he is invoked by name. The body of Pope Marcellinus (d. 304)

was deposited in a cubiculum leading out of this crypt. Pope Sylvester built a cemeterial church over this part of the cemetery, now become the property of the Christian community, with a stair constructed inside an ancient cubiculum leading down from the church to the tomb of S. Crescentius below. Beneath the altar of the church was the tomb of the martyrs Felix and Philip, who belonged to the group of seven saints celebrated on 10 July, and assumed by the legend to be sons of S. Felicita. They were probably buried in the outdoor cemetery, and Pope Sylvester arranged the position of his basilica so that the altar should be erected over their tomb. Sylvester himself (d. 335) was buried in this church according to his own wish (fig. 34) and four later Popes were buried here also, viz. Liberius (d. 366), Siricius (d. 398), Celestinus (d. 432), and Vigilius (d. 555). Pope Marcellus (d. 310) was also deposited in Priscilla, but the place of his tomb is not known.

The outdoor cemetery remained in use after the basilica was built, and included several mausolea, one of which is joined on to the church, considerably increasing its length.

The catacomb of Priscilla is one of the most important cemeteries of underground Rome, both on account of the large number of its monuments and for their outstanding value.

Via Nomentana

9. THE MAJOR CEMETERY (COEMETERIUM MAIUS)

The *Coemeterium Maius* is situated on the Via Nomentana almost opposite the cemetery of Priscilla

on the parallel Via Salaria; certain early sources give it this name, while more recently for a brief period it went under the appellation of *Coemeterium Ostrianum*.



Fig. 35 — Major Cemetery — The Good Shepherd.

This catacomb is the largest of the Via Nomentana, which is probably the reason for its being called *Maius*, more especially when it is compared with the neighbouring cemetery of S. Agnes. It is possible that there

was a Christian family hypogaeum here in the second century, and that the ground was acquired by the Christian community after 200 A. D. to be turned into a larger cemetery.



Fig. 36 — Major Cemetery — Adoration of the Magi.

The entrance to the catacomb is in Via Asmara, and the galleries are on two levels at no great difference of depth.

This catacomb is interesting architectonically. Several

of the crypts are spacious with large apses, and many are decorated with cornices and brackets, all cut out of the rock. Several of them have chairs (*cathedrae*) also cut out of the tufa, either backed on to the



Fig. 37 — Major Cemetery - Madonna and Child
between monograms of Christ.

entrance wall or close to the apse, these were probably for the use of the family when they came to visit the tombs of their relations and to pray for their souls.

One fourth century crypt is formed like a complete little church. In a gallery near the entrance there were two double cubicula, one on each side of the gallery, and exactly opposite each other. Later on all this region was deepened, beginning from the bottom of the stair, and a new square chamber with a low vault was then added to the end of the double crypt on

the left of the gallery. At the centre of this at the end a chair was cut out of the tufa with a bench to the right and left, reproducing the arrangement of the



Fig. 38 — Major Cemetery — Detail of Fig. 36.
(viz. Two defunct persons at the feet of a Saint).

apse in the basilicas. Evidently this great crypt must have been used for the celebration of the eucharist on those days dedicated to the memory of the dead buried in this region.

Many of the crypts and arcosolia of this cemetery are decorated with third and fourth century paintings.

Besides the usual Biblical scenes which recall God's protection of souls, such as Daniel and the lions, the Three Children in the furnace, and Jonah, there are Adam and Eve on each side of the apple tree with the serpent, the Good Shepherd surrounded by his flock (fig. 35), Christ between two apostles, and in another place in the middle of six apostles, and also the parable of the wise and foolish virgins combined with the celestial banquet, to which the virgin Victoria (buried in the arcosolium decorated with these paintings) is admitted. Even the scene of the adoration of the Magi (fig. 36) is completed by their visit to Herod. In the arcosolium of a crypt in the gallery at the foot of the entrance stair the defunct husband and wife are represented on the vault in the attitude of prayer on each side of the bust of Christ. In the lunette is the bust of a richly dressed woman with a veil on her head, in the position of an orante. She has a child on her lap whose head is in front of her breast, and the Constantinian monogram ☩ is painted on each side (fig. 37). This is most probably a picture of the Madonna and Child of the middle of the fourth century. A subject hitherto unique among Roman cemeterial paintings, has been found here recently, viz two defunct persons kneeling in prayer at the feet of a female saint, probably S. Emerentiana. buried in this cemetery (fig. 38).

The tomb of the martyr Emerentiana was venerated in a cemeterial church erected above the catacomb, which makes it probable that she was buried in the outdoor cemetery. Besides this saint the ancient sources

place four other martyrs in the Major cemetery, Victor, Felix, Papias and Alexander, but their tombs have not so far been found.

An inscription found in Rome, which must have come from this cemetery, gives the names of the martyrs venerated here, and also the date of their feast, 16 Sept.:

XVI · KAL · OCTB · MARTVRORV*m in cimi*
 TERV MAIORE VICTORIS FFL*icis Papiæ*
 EMERENTIANETIS ET ALEXAND*ri*

This monument, of which the right side is missing, belongs to the fifth century. It also gives the correct name of the cemetery.

Among the sepulchral inscriptions discovered in the catacomb there are some with very fine lettering which are not later than the beginning of the third century, the simplicity of the text and the system of nomenclature are also characteristic of this period. Some other epitaphs belong to members of the families of fossors, whose work it was to excavate the galleries and graves. The Greek inscription of a Sicilian named Calixtus ends with the rare and beautiful formula: "My abode is in eternity,". Another inscription was made by a soldier of the sixth cohort of the Pretorian Guards for the tomb of his wife Aurelia Prisca:

LICINEIVS · MIL(e)X · PRETORIANVS
 AVR · PRICE · COCVVGI · K · BENE
 MERENTI · IN · PACE · COH · VI

This catacomb, although not completely excavated, contains much that is of prime interest to the student of these ancient Christian burial places.

10. THE CEMETERY OF S. AGNES

The magnificent cemeterial basilica of S. Agnes is situated on the Via Nomentana on the spot indicated by the Itineraries, at a short distance from the *Coemeterium Maius* but nearer to the city gate. It was erected in its primitive form by the princess Constantina over the tomb of this highly venerated Roman martyr, and having been kept in constant use throughout the centuries, the relics of S. Agnes have never been removed, but are still preserved in a closed chamber beneath the high altar.

The church was built at the level of the galleries of the catacomb over the place where the young martyr was buried, the apse and side walls being inserted in the hill in which the catacomb is made, while the front part of the building emerges into the open, owing to the steep declivity on the left of the road. It was on this account that the architect who reconstructed the basilica under Pope Honorius I (625-638) was obliged to carry the upper wall of the nave to an unusual height in order to admit adequate lighting from windows above the ground. So also, partly for aesthetic reasons, but chiefly to prevent this wall from being too heavy for the columns which supported it, he made a gallery over the aisles and narthex, placing rows of smaller columns over the larger ones below. The church has retained this rich architectural form up to the present, as well as the fine mosaic of the apse which was made at the same time.

The catacomb is entered from the basilica and is on the same level, it has been completely excavated and studied. It consists of small separate regions which belong mostly to the end of the third and the fourth centuries. The primitive hypogaeum was small, consisting of merely a few galleries, and probably belonged to the family of S. Agnes, because at the time when this martyr was buried, either in the second half of the third century (persecution of Valerian) or the beginning of the fourth (persecution of Diocletian), it was still private property. However after the body of the martyr found its resting place here, many of the bretheren wished to be buried near her tomb, so that during the course of the fourth century the cemetery, whose beginnings go back to the year 200 A. D. or a short time after, was enlarged until it reached its present dimensions. It is possible that when the first basilica was built over the venerated tomb by the princess Constantina, the area of the cemetery together with the catacomb below became the property of the church of Rome.

This catacomb is interesting for its austere simplicity, the galleries are low and narrow, and the crypts are small and have retained their primitive form, and many of the graves are intact. There are no paintings, but there are important monuments and inscriptions. One noteworthy object found here is a marble circle containing the monogram of Christ with the spaces filled in with enamel. On the circular border is carved the acclamation.

IN HOC SIGNO SIRICI (*vinces*)

The text is evidently an allusion to the vision of Constantine the Great, as related by Lattantius and

Eusebius, to which it applies a religious and eschatological significance. This little monument is now in the Vatican Christian museum it has been replaced by a cast in the catacomb.

Some of the inscriptions have very fine ancient lettering, identical with that of the most ancient inscriptions of the neighbouring Major Cemetery. One of these closed the *loculus* of a lector of the Roman Church.

FAVOR · FAVOR²LECTOR

Others have the three names in use among the Roman nobility, which is rare in Christian sepulchral inscriptions, e. g.

AVRELIA · PHOEBILLA · ET
P · AELIVS · NARCISSVS ·

One mutilated epitaph ends with the ancient Christian acclamation.

SPIRITVM TVVM
DEVS REFRIGERET
May God refresh thy soul.

The tomb of a presbyter named Celerinus had for its closure a metrical inscription with the consular date of the year 381.

The tomb of an abbess called Serena was discovered in a gallery which was made at the beginning of the fifth century under the apse of the first basilica. She died on 8 May 514, at 85 years of age. It is the most ancient epitaph of an abbess in existence.

+ HIC REQVIESCIT IN PACE +
SERENA ABBATISSA · SV ·
QVAE VIXIT ANNVS PM · LXXXV
DEP · II · ID · MAI · SENATORE
+ VC · CONS +

The great marble slab inscribed by Pope Damasus (366-384) with his epigram in honour of S. Agnes, is attached to the wall of the stair leading down to the basilica, in company with many other interesting inscriptions, most of which came from the Christian cemetery of S. Agnes. This epigram, carved in the unique and beautiful lettering of Furius Dionysius Philocalus, the engraver of Pope Damasus, is in a perfect state of preservation, and gives various particulars of the martyrdom of the Saint according to contemporary tradition.

II. THE SO-CALLED CEMETERY OF S. NICOMEDES

Two of the Itineraries to the sanctuaries of the martyrs mention a third shrine on the Via Nomentana, namely that of S. Nicomedes, over which a church had been erected which the Itinerary of Einsiedeln places on the right of the road. A Christian catacomb has been found close to the gate of the city, the entrance of which is in Via dei Villini. Since the site corresponds to that mentioned by the Itineraries, and moreover the remains of a rectangular building with an apse were discovered near the entrance, this catacomb was supposed to be that of S. Nicomedes. Nothing however has been found during the excavations which could identify it as such, and the building near the entrance might be simply a mausoleum, like those for instance at the cemetery of S. Sebastian.

This catacomb was never one of the large Christian cemeteries of Rome, but must, on account of its small

dimensions, have always been a private burying place, and it was undoubtedly Christian. It consists chiefly of one wide gallery lined with ancient masonry which ends in a cistern. Along the wall of the gallery runs a conduit in a partial state of preservation, made of amphorae. This has been lengthened in the form of a long tunnel which turns off to the right. This makes it probable that the gallery originally formed part of the plant for the water supply of a large Roman villa. Later it was used as a burial place by the Christian proprietor, the original stair continuing to serve as an entrance. Three cubicula were made leading off this gallery, two on the left, and one on the right which was richly decorated with marble. A short side gallery was also excavated further down, and tombs were cut in the walls of the first section of the water conduit on the right. The inscriptions found belong to the third and fourth centuries. Among them is one of special importance found during the works carried out here in 1865, and belonging undoubtedly to a sepulchral monument in this spot:

MONVMENTVM · VALERI · M
 ERCVRI ET IVLITTES IVLIAN
 I ET QVINTILIES VERECVNDIES LI
 BERTIS LIBERTABVSQVE · POSTE
 RISQVE EORVM AT RELIGIONE
 M PERTINENTES MEAM HOC A
 MPLIVS IN CIRCIVITVM CIRCA
 MONVMENTVM LATI LONGE
 PER PED · BINOS QVOD PERTIN
 ET AT IPSVM MONVMENT

From the phrase stating that the place of sepulture was intended also for the liberti of both sexes with their descendants, who belonged to the religion of the founder Valerius Mercurius, it is possible that he and also Julitta Juliani and Quintilia Verecundia were Christians. The measurements given of the piece of ground pertaining to the monument are also interesting.

Several other small Christian hypogaea belonging to a late period (fourth century) were found between this catacomb and the city walls during the construction of the large block of buildings for the administration of the State Railways. Pagan tombs and some small Jewish cemeteries were found close by.

12. THE SO-CALLED CEMETERY OF S. ALEXANDER

Besides the three Christian cemeteries already described, which lie within the suburban limits of the city of Rome, a fourth cemetery was found on the Via Nomentana in 1855, ten kilometres from the city gate. This could not have been used by the Roman Christians, but by those who lived in the country, in the territory belonging to two villages near together, viz. Nomentum (Mentana) and Ficulea. One of the ancient Itineraries gives the tombs of three martyrs at the seventh mile of the Via Nomentana, who are buried in this cemetery: Aléxander, Eventius and Theodulus, and the excavations have brought to light the cemeterial church constructed in the catacomb about 400 A. D., at the level of their tombs (fig. 39).



Fig. 39 — Cemetery of S. Alexander — The excavations in the basilica.



Fig. 40 — Cemetery of S. Alexander — The altar.

A wide ancient stair leads down to the sanctuary, which consists of two chief parts: a somewhat irregular hall to the right of the entrance ending in a square tribune, and a long hall to the left ending in an apse, which was added at a somewhat later period. At the back of the tribune of the older hall is an episcopal throne, while in front of the tribune, but out of line with it, is the altar, placed over two graves lined with marble. This was a box shaped altar closed on three sides with slabs of marble and in front with a perforated slab inclosing a *fenestrella*. On the border of this slab, above the *fenestrella*, the end part of the dedicatory inscription can still be read (fig. 40).

//// ET ALEXANDRO DELICATVS VOTO *posuit*
 DEDI
 CAN
 TE AE
 PIS
 COP
 VRS

The altar is almost complete, having been put together out of the fragments found on the spot. In the inscription the name of Alexander was preceded by at least one other, probably by that of S. Eventius, so that the missing words would have been: Sanctis martyribus Eventio et Alexandro (etc.), and the two graves under the altar contained the remains of these two martyrs, the tomb of S. Theodulus being in another part of the church.

The bishop Ursus of Ficulea and Nomentum is mentioned in a letter of Pope Innocent I. at the beginning of the fifth century, so that the date of the dedication of

the altar is certain. The primitive subterranean church may have been constructed somewhat earlier, in the fourth century. It was enlarged later on, the original hall being lengthened by the addition of a long chamber ending in a semicircular apse. The site of the primitive tomb of S. Theodulus has been identified in a large chamber opening off the further side of the church, to the left of the altar. This tomb, made in one of the narrow galleries of the catacomb, had been isolated later on, and adorned with small pillars and a transenna, some remains of which have been put together here.

All this group of monuments was thoroughly examined and systemized during the two years from 1936 to 1938, and inclosed in a plain church which forms a protecting shell. The ruined sanctuary within, which before was open to the weather, has been left untouched, and free from modern additions. This monument is of particular importance on account of the way the underground cemeterial church is arranged with regard to the martyrs' tombs, and also for the state of preservation of the altar of circ. 400 A. D. with its *fenestrella confessionis*.

A legend dating from the fifth or sixth century identified the martyr S. Alexander venerated on the Via Nomentana with Pope Alexander I. (circ. 109-119), but this identification is certainly erroneous. The three martyrs honoured here suffered in the persecution of Diocletian, as is proved by the chronology of the monuments of the catacomb. It is probable that the burial place of a Christian family already existed in this spot, and the three heroes, martyred in the neighbourhood, were deposited in it. During the fourth century the catacomb

was considerably enlarged and became the cemetery of the Christians of Ficulea and Nomentum, as can be seen from the inscriptions of subdeacons and from those of two bishops, one of whom was called Adeodatus; the name of the other is missing from the mutilated epitaph, which bears the date of 569.

The catacomb is not large, and exhibits the modest characteristics of the poorer underground cemeteries of the Roman Campagna. Its ancient name is unknown.



SECOND GROUP

THE CEMETERIES ON THE EAST OF THE CITY

The Christian cemeteries which have come to light on the eastern side of Rome or which figure in the ancient sources are found along three of the ancient Roman roads: the Via Tiburtina, the Via Labicana (now Casilina) and the Via Latina. In this region the catacombs were less numerous than in those towards the north and south of the city. None of them have been completely excavated, and that of SS. Peter and Marcellinus is the only one in which a large proportion of the galleries is accessible, regular excavations having been carried out in several points.

Via Tiburtina

There are three catacombs along the Via Tiburtina, all in one group and not far apart: the cemetery of S. Laurence in the Agro Verano, that of S. Hippolytus, where the ancient Itineraries show the tombs of various martyrs, and an anonymous cemetery discovered recently, which is not mentioned in any of the historical sources.

13. THE CEMETERY OF S. LAURENCE

This catacomb, excavated in the hill under the great modern cemetery of Rome, takes its name from the celebrated and highly venerated martyr Laurence, deacon of Pope S. Sixtus, and like him a victim of the persecution of Valerian in 258. The holy deacon was buried in a Christian cemetery in this part of the Via Tiburtina. His legend states that a pious widow called Ciriaca prepared his tomb, so the cemetery took her name also at a later period. The first cemeterial church was erected over the tomb of the martyr in the time of Constantine the Great, this was above ground with steps leading down to the tomb, sufficient space being cleared around the tomb to form a crypt.

Pope Pelagius II (578-590) enlarged this crypt, building a basilica over the tomb at the same level as the catacomb and partly sunk in the hill, similar to the basilica of S. Agnes. This church has a nave and two aisles, with a gallery over the aisles and narthex. The large mediaeval church is backed on to it, at a higher level, and has a raised choir arranged above the nave of the basilica of Pelagius. No trace remains of the sanctuary containing the tombs of S. Abundius and S. Irenaeus or of that with the tombs of S. Cyriaca, S. Justinus and S. Crescentius, shown in the ancient Itineraries, nor has the sepulchre of S. Romanus, venerated in an underground crypt of the catacomb, been found.

This catacomb suffered badly when the modern cemetery was made. A vast region close to the basilica is still partially accessible, and is entered from the left

side of the cloister, but in other parts of the hill called the Pincietto many galleries have been destroyed. From what is left it can be seen that the underground cemetery was very large, and one of the great necropolises of the Christian community of Rome. Among the few paintings found are those of two remarkable arcosolia decorated with religious scenes. In one of these, besides episodes from the Bible, there is a representation of Jesus Christ between two apostles, and a scene of the judging of the defunct Zosimianus. In the other arcosolium are depicted the miracle of the manna, Peter's denial, the introduction of a defunct woman into Paradise, a Magus with a star, and the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. Many inscriptions from the catacomb are preserved in the cloister of the PP. Cappuccini adjoining the basilica, and in the epigraphical museum at the Lateran.

14. ANONYMOUS CEMETERY NEAR S. LAURENCE

Another subterranean cemetery was discovered by accident in 1926 and 1928 in the hill on the opposite side of the road to the basilica of S. Laurence, when the cutting was made for the Viale della Regina. This cemetery was completely unknown, not being mentioned in any of the ancient historical and liturgical sources. The excavated portion lies chiefly under the road and between it and the city. The galleries which stretch in the direction of S. Laurence all end in the rock, showing that the new catacomb was not joined on to that of S. Laurence, but constituted an independent cemetery.

A primitive stair leads down to a high wide gallery with another main gallery at right angles to it from which several side galleries lead off, forming a regular network. The ancient fossors filled up the whole of this region with earth taken from galleries made at a later period, so that in the recent excavations most of the loculi were found intact, with many inscriptions and a variety of objects stuck in the mortar. In a large crypt with an apse were found four sculptured marble sarcophagi with inscriptions, three of which were still in their original position. The fourth had been moved during works carried out in the crypt at a later period. The chamber had been finally partially filled with earth in which graves had been made, lined with masonry (*formae*). This monument is of special interest as being a typical example of a hypogaeum of a rich family of Roman equites. The sarcophagi belong to the fourth century.

The galleries of the region nearest to the primitive stair go back however to the third century. Among the inscriptions, many of which are painted on the brick closures of the loculi, are the following:

PARENTES FECERVN FILI
E CARISSIME QVE BI
XIT ANNOS IIII DIEBVS
XXX DORMIT IN DEO
DEP CAL OCTOB

The parents made (this tomb) for their beloved daughter, who lived 4 years and 30 days; she sleeps in God. Deposited (here) 1 October.

EYKAPΠIC ΙΔΙΩ ΑΝΔΡΙ ΑΙΛΙΩ
ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΩ ΕΘΗΚΕΝ ΤΟ ΠΙΝΑ
COY EN ΑΓΑΘΩ

Eucarpe prepared this tomb for her husband Aelius Januarius - May thy soul be in the good.

CHRISTE ROGA PRO TVOS
OMNES VIXSIT MENSES
XV DIES XIII

Christe pray for all thine own; she lived 15 months and 13 days. (Christe is the name of the defunct).

In one of the galleries a tomb was found which had been richly decorated, perhaps at a later period. The votive inscription, painted in red letters, is in a good state of preservation, it states that this work of decoration was dedicated to the martyr Novatian by a deacon. There is no doubt that this is the historic tomb of a Novatian venerated as a martyr. None of the ancient Itineraries however mention this martyr or allude to his sepulchre. Probably no cemeterial church was ever built over this tomb; the martyr was not the object of any public liturgical cult in the Roman church, as was the case with other martyrs known to the ancient sources, and it is possible therefore that the entrance to the catacomb was already blocked in the seventh century, so that the tomb could not be visited. Some have thought that this was the grave of the heretic Novatian, the third century schismatic who was elected antipope by a faction in rivalry to S. Cornelius during the struggle about the *Lapsi* of the persecution of Decius. This hypothesis however encounters the serious objection that

Novatian is not given the title of bishop in the inscription, it being most unlikely that this would have been omitted in the case of the schismatic bishop of this name. In the Martyrology of Jerome the name of Novatian, without any further title, is found among the names of the Roman martyrs.

15. THE CEMETERY OF S. HIPPOLYTUS

In a hill on the left of the Via Tiburtina, at a short distance from S. Laurence, lies the catacomb of S. Hippolytus, which takes its name from the learned Roman presbyter, the celebrated contemporary of the Popes Zephyrinus and Calixtus, and their opponent in a controversy about the Holy Trinity which caused him to be elected antipope by his partisans against S. Calixtus. Later on however, before his death, which took place in Sardinia, where he had been sent into exile with Pope S. Pontianus, he became reconciled to the Roman church and was venerated as a martyr. His corpse was brought back to Rome with that of S. Pontianus, and while the latter was deposited in the crypt of the Popes at S. Calixtus, Hippolytus was buried in a catacomb of the Via Tiburtina, which eventually was called by his name.

The primitive gallery with the tomb of Hippolytus was widened and converted into a large underground chapel in the fourth century, in order to allow more space around his sepulchre for the celebration of the

eucharist and the accomodation of a larger number of worshippers. This chapel has been found and excavated, it is entered from the ancient stair which leads first to a vestibule, from which, the entrance into the chapel is flanked by two columns.

The long nave of the sanctuary ends in an apse at a slightly higher level, reached by two steps. In the middle of the upper step are the remains of the base of the altar, which was probably erected here during restorations at a later period, the traces of which can be clearly seen in the walls and pavement of the sanctuary. On the left wall, near the entrance, among other graffiti is an invocation to S. Hippolytus.

IPPOLITE IN MENTE (*habeas*)

PET(*rum*) (*p*)EC(*cat*)OR(*em*)

In an epigram, nearly all the pieces of which have been found, there is a record of the works carried out in the sanctuary of S. Hippolytus by a presbyter called Leo at the time of Pope Damasus.

An epitaph of the year 528 covered the tomb of a lector named Hilarus of the Title of Pudens (S. Pudenziana), who died at the age of thirty.

+ HIC REQVIESCIT · IN · PACE · HILARVS

LICTOR TT PVDENTIS

QVI VIXIT · ANN · PL · M · XXX

DEP · GI IDVS IVL · PC · MABORTI · V · C

There is also an inscription of a presbyter of the same titular church, whose name was Romulus.

LOCVS
ROMVLI
PRESBYTERI
TITVLI PVD
*en*TIANAE

In the other epitaphs here of presbyters, the titular church to which they belonged is not mentioned. The fact however that the Title of Pudens occurs twice, makes it probable that the cemetery of S. Hippolytus was managed by the presbyters of that basilica, and that the Christians of that region of the city were buried here.

A few partly ruined galleries can be reached behind the apse of the subterranean church. They have not been properly excavated, and do not contain monuments of any particular value.

Via Labicana

Outside the city walls and on either side of the Via Labicana was a large Imperial estate. In this property, at a place called "*ad (or inter) duas lauros*," "at the two laurels," at about 3 kilometres from the gate, Constantine the Great built a handsome mausoleum. This was a large domed rotunda with niches in the walls; the body of his mother Helena was deposited here, but removed later on to Constantinople.

16. THE CEMETERY OF SS. PETER AND MARCELLINUS

“AD DUAS LAUROS,”

In the immediate neighbourhood of the imperial estate where the imposing ruins of the mausoleum still exist, there is a large Christian cemetery founded in Christian property towards the beginning of the third century. This date can be assumed from the fact that throughout the vast regions of the first floor of the catacomb which are now accessible, not a single monument has been found which can be attributed to the second century, while there are extensive primitive nuclei each with its own stair, which were certainly in use in the third century, as can be deduced from the presence of tombs of martyrs of the persecution of Diocletian, the character of the sepulchral inscriptions, and the most ancient of the cemeterial paintings.

The ancient Itineraries ascribe two groups of martyrs to this cemetery, which was very much enlarged during the second half of the third and the fourth century by the addition of many regular galleries and crypts. The first group gives us the names of S. Tiburtius, buried in a church above ground, erected probably over his tomb in the outdoor cemetery, SS. Peter and Marcellinus, venerated in an underground crypt, and S. Gorgonius, whose remains reposed in another crypt further within the catacomb. These four martyrs are represented in a great picture on the vault of a crypt of the end of the fourth century, a picture which does not belong to the series of ancient cemeterial paintings, but

is inspired by the iconographical compositions which decorated the basilicas erected over the tombs of the martyrs, or founded in their honour within the city. In the upper zone is represented Christ enthroned between the apostles Peter and Paul. In the lower is the Lamb of God between the four martyrs mentioned above, who raise their right hands in acclamation of the Redeemer, the King of the celestial kingdom to which they are admitted. The region to which this crypt belongs came into existence at the end of the fourth century close to the earlier region which already contained the primitive tombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, which have been discovered in the excavations. The two martyrs were buried in two plain loculi in a subterranean gallery, one above the other.

Later on, in the fourth century, in order to provide more space around the tombs for the celebration of the eucharist and the better accomodation of worshippers, the block of tufa containing the two graves was isolated, and an underground chapel with an apse was made in such a way that the tombs occupied the middle of the sanctuary in front of the apse. This chapel was richly decorated by Pope S. Damasus, and also restored at subsequent periods and provided with a wide stair of its own, thus forming the interesting memorial to the two martyrs which still exists. The tomb of S. Gorgonius has never been found.

The second group of martyrs attributed to this cemetery was distributed in three different places within the catacomb. First forty martyrs in one spot, then thirty in another spot, and finally the group of the Four Crowned Saints, to whom was dedicated a new



Fig. 41 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Adam and Eve.

basilica within the city towards the end of the fourth century on the Coelian hill. This basilica was the Title of Emiliana, which still exists in the restricted form

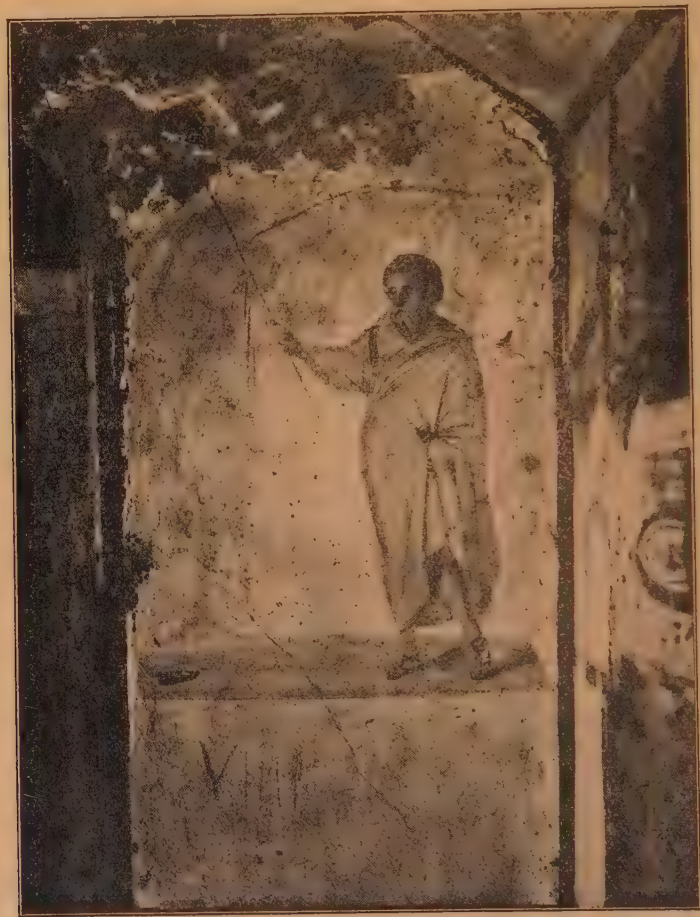


Fig. 42 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Moses.

imposed on it by the reconstruction of the Middle Ages. The tomb of the four martyrs is almost certainly to be identified with a double crypt, reinforced



Fig. 43 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Daniel in the lions' den.



Fig. 44 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Job.

with masonry, at the end of a long artery with its own stair and regular side galleries, a region which was created in the second half of the third century and enlarged during the fourth. The double crypt undoubtedly



Fig. 45 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus
Christ and the woman of Samaria.

contained the tombs of highly venerated historical martyrs. This is proved incontestably by the graffiti on the walls, the restorations carried out after the fourth century, and the conclusive fact that the stair, the historic crypt and the main gallery connecting them were not



Fig 46 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus
The healing of the bent woman.



Fig. 47 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Ceiling of a crypt:
Christ teaching — Multiplication of the loaves — Moses striking the rock.

only reinforced with masonry during the fifth or the sixth century, but these walls shut off the galleries and cubicula on either side of the main gallery, so that only the double crypt remained accessible as being the sanctuary of the martyrs venerated here, who were in



Fig. 48 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus —
Multiplication of the loaves.

all probability the Four Crowned Saints. This unusual title is given to these martyrs in the early documents, the reason for it is unknown, but may possibly be derived from some pictorial representation of them at their tomb.

The catacomb *ad duas lauros*, which later took the name of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, is extremely rich in paintings, crypts *arcosolia* and even walls of galleries being lavishly adorned with them, no other catacomb



Fig. 49 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus
Young man with a book.

contains so many. These decorations belong to the years between 250 and 400 A. D. and form a most important group for the study of Christian iconography during this period.

As to the subjects represented in these frescoes, we find an unusually large number of all the usual Biblical scenes, e. g. Adam and Eve (fig. 41), Moses (fig. 42), Daniel in the lions' den (fig. 43), Job (fig. 44), the Adoration of the Magi, the woman of Samaria (fig. 45), and the woman with the issue; while among those from the New Testament there is one which is so far unique, the healing of the bent woman (fig. 46). Besides this however there are many other new subjects, most of which are peculiar to this catacomb. In one scene of the baptism of Christ rays issue from the beak of the dove which represents the Holy Spirit, and fall upon the head of Christ. In some cubicula there are regular Christological sets, the pictures being chosen on purpose to illustrate the coming of the Redeemer. Other series represent the solemn initiation of the faithful with Christ as Teacher, the baptism of Christ, and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, symbol of the eucharist (figs. 47-48).

Among the subjects found only in this catacomb are youths holding books (fig. 49), banquet scenes in which the servants who wait at table are given the names of Irene (Peace) and Agape (Love), they are allegorical representations of everlasting joy. In some crypts is depicted the heavenly *refrigerium*: a woman offering a goblet of wine to the defunct; the rare scene of the wedding of Cana is found in another cubiculum. There are also many representations of fossors, with their tools on their shoulders and a lighted lamp in their hands, or else engaged in their underground labour of excavating tombs, and many figures of oranti (fig. 50).



Fig. 50 — Cemetery of SS. Peter and Marcellinus — Gouth as orante.

A large fresco, already described, is taken from the series of monumental pictures in use in the basilicas, and represents Christ, the apostles Peter and Paul and four martyrs buried here.

Among the numerous graffiti in the crypt of SS. Peter and Marcellinus and the neighbouring galleries are some remarkable ones, e. g. the following:



CRISTE IN MENTE HABEAS MAR
CELLINVS PECCATORE ET IOBI
NV SEMPER VIVATIS IN DEO

Criste, remember Marcellinus a sinner and Jovinus, you live for ever in God.

Close to a loculus is an inscription scratched on the tufa which records a lector of the titular basilica of S. Eusebius, Olympus by name:

OLYMPI
LECTORIS DE
D EUSEBI
LOCVS EST

In a gallery behind the apse of the crypt of SS. Peter and Marcellinus there is an inscription in its primitive place, which states that the defunct has been accepted by God and the saints:

A · DEO · ET · SANCTIS · ACCETA ///

An inscription in memory of a Julius Marius Silvanus and Julia Martina shows a person carrying a fish.

17. THE CEMETERY OF S. CASTULUS

A marginal note added to the text of the seventh century Itinerary "The sepulchres of the holy martyrs", states that close to the Via Prenestina, on the Via Labicana, near the aqueduct, was the church of the saints Stratonicus and Castulus, whose bodies reposed underground a short distance away. In the year 1672 a region of this catacomb was found near the Porta Maggiore, between the Via Prenestina and the Via Casilina (the ancient Labicana), close to the arches of the aqueduct. An inscription discovered on this occasion says that the tomb of the defunct named in the text was near to the martyr S. Castulus, making it probable that this was really the catacomb where this martyr was buried. Other galleries of the cemetery were found in 1864 during the construction of the railway to Civita Vecchia, but the entrance was walled up rendering the catacomb inaccessible, and regular excavations have never been made there.

Via Latina

18. CEMETERY OF S. GORDIANUS

Of the three cemeteries known to us from the ancient Itineraries along the Via Latina, that of S. Gordianus was the nearest to the city. The tombs of several martyrs were venerated there: S. Gordianus, buried beneath the altar of a cemeterial church, S. Epimachus, SS. Quartus and Quintus in a sanctuary near by, and

S. Trophimus below in a crypt. Small groups of galleries presumably belonging to this catacomb have come to light on various occasions, but no systematic excavations took place there until 1941, when a large section of the cemetery was opened up and definitely recognized as that of S. Gordianus.

The excavations up to date include two regions, one of which contains its original stair, each region having two floors. There is also a converted quarry. The tombs are very crowded and of a poor type, there being no arcosolia or sarcophagi or even paintings, and only one plain cubiculum. There are many inscriptions, and also small objects, lamps etc. still in their places, but there is nothing here earlier than the fourth century, the primitive nucleus of this cemetery having yet to be explored.

The present entrance is in Vicolo dell'Acqua Mariana, a turning off the Via Latina 300 metres from the city gate.

19. CEMETERY OF S. TERTULLINUS

The next cemetery along the Via Latina, that of S. Tertullinus, has not yet been found. It contained a cemeterial basilica, and lay between the catacombs of S. Gordianus and Apronianus.

20. CEMETERY NEAR THE FIRST MILE OF THE VIA LATINA

This large catacomb with three floors, discovered in 1937, must, almost certainly from its position be that of Apronianus, though no monumental evidence in proof

of this has so far been forthcoming from the catacomb itself. This was one of the most important cemeteries of the Via Latina, and included a church dedicated to S. Eugenia who was buried there in a chapel, and also the tomb of S. Emiseus. The present excavations comprise several galleries, with arcosolia and crypts with unique decorations in stucco, besides the ancient stair of the region. There are a good number of inscriptions and many symbols and figures, but no paintings have so far come to light, and practically everything found as yet belongs to the fourth century, there is nothing earlier than the end of the third. Above the catacomb are the remains of a small building with a marble threshold and mosaic floor, beneath which were found formae and a sarcophagus, the latter has been removed. Some broken inscriptions also found above ground probably belonged to the outdoor cemetery. They have been nailed up on the modern entrance stair.

It is possible that two hypogaea found previously in this neighbourhood may belong to this group. One has a crypt decorated with Biblical pictures, some of which are of an unusual type; the other, a section of a catacomb with a painted crypt containing the tomb of a Trebius Justus, has scenes from the life of the defunct, viz. the building of a house and the sale of country produce, besides religious subjects.

The entrance to the catacomb is in Via Cesare Correnti, near the corner of the Via Latina.

THIRD GROUP

THE CEMETERIES ON THE SOUTH OF THE CITY

A large and most important group of ancient Christian cemeteries occupies the region on the south of Rome, along the Vie Appia and Ardeatina, to which may be added the Via Ostiense with its memories of Roman martyrs. This may almost be called the centre of Christian underground Rome, including as it does the *Memoria* of the apostles Peter and Paul under the basilica of S. Sebastian, and the crypt of the third century Popes in the catacomb of S. Calixtus.

Via Appia

21. THE CEMETERY OF S. SEBASTIAN "AD CATACUMBAS," AND THE "MEMORIA APOSTOLORUM,"

The small valley close to the Via Appia between the hill under which lie the catacombs of Calixtus and Praetextatus and the other hill crowned by the great round tomb of Cecilia Metella was called by the ancients *ad (in) Catacumbas*, a name which was probably derived

from a deep funnel shaped hollow at the head of the valley. In the first century of our era, at the place where there is now the little piazza in front of the basilica of S. Sebastian, a side road branched off the via Appia sloping down towards this hollow on the right of the road. Rows of columbaria, having their entrances on the side road, were made on each side of it during the first century, joining on to one another. Behind the end columbaria on the left towards the south, there are two rooms which were probably used in connection with the cult of the dead whose ashes reposed in the tiny niches of the pagan columbaria.

Somewhat later, in the second century, three great crypts were excavated in the rocky hollow behind the left row of columbaria. The first was the property of a certain *Clodius Hermes*, as is shown by the inscription over the entrance, it was originally intended to contain the urns in which were placed the ashes of the cremated bodies. Shortly after being made however, it was adapted for burial by inhumation, and the walls were lined with brickwork in which niches shaped like loculi were prepared to receive intact corpses. The other two crypts which were excavated at the same time were intended from the first for burial by inhumation in loculi. The first crypt is richly decorated with paintings, the two others with very fine stuccoes which are in a perfect state of preservation on the ceilings. There is an *arenario* on the other side of the hollow, with loculi cut in its rocky walls.

At the beginning of the third century the proprietor of this sepulchral area became a Christian, as is shown by a graffito of the mystical Christian word

IXΘYC (= Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour c. f. p. 153) with the letter T, symbol of the cross, on a wall of the second underground cubiculum (fig. 51), and also by the Christian inscriptions on the open air graves cut out in the rock near the crypts and in the *arenario*.

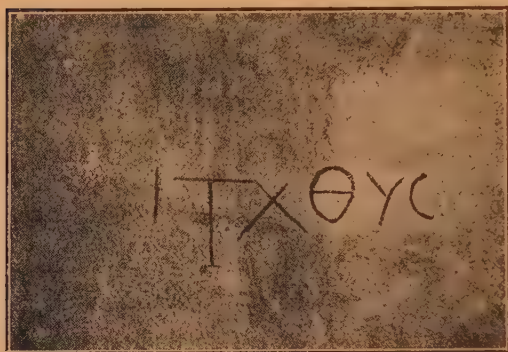


Fig. 51 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian — Graffito of IXΘYC with the symbol of the Cross.

An upper story was added to the crypt of Clodius Hermes, coated with stucco (fig. 52) on which Biblical scenes are painted, including that of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes.

The excavation of cemeterial galleries beneath this area was begun during the same period, and during the third and fourth centuries these spread into several regions each with its own stair, forming the catacomb *ad Catacumbas*, whose name became later, as we have seen, the common designation for underground Christian cemeteries. The galleries and crypts of this catacomb are very plain, and in some, that have been recently excavated the tombs are still intact.

Paintings are rare, one of these however is unique in cemeterial iconography, viz. the Nativity with the ox and the ass beside the manger. S. Sebastian, a

martyr of the persecution of Diocletian, was buried in one of the underground galleries, the primitive form of



Fig. 52 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian — Stucco decorations in the crypt of Cludius Hermes.

his tomb cannot be ascertained because a subterranean chapel, entered from the basilica, was made there in the fourth century.

The Itineraries mention another martyr here, S. Quirinus, whose tomb was near that of S. Sebastian. He however was not a Roman martyr, but bishop of Siscia in Pannonia, and was, like S. Sebastian, a victim of the last persecution. His relics were brought to Rome by the Christians of those parts when they fled to Italy in the fifth century from the invasion of the barbaric tribes in the Danube provinces, and were deposited in a crypt beneath the pavement of a large mausoleum erected behind the basilica (the so-called Platonica). An epigram of Pope Damasus, now in the church of S. Sebastian, acquaints us with the fact that there was another Roman martyr buried in the cemetery *ad Catacumbas*, S. Eutychius, but the place of his tomb is not known for it must have become inaccessible in very early times since no Itinerary gives his name.

A few decades before the body of S. Sebastian was brought to the catacomb, a memorial of the apostles Peter and Paul had been founded in the area behind the ancient columbaria, between these and the *arenario* in the rocky hollow.

In order to provide the necessary space for the construction of this monument, this deep hollow, with the three sepulchral chambers and part of the *arenario*, was filled with earth up to the level of the rocky ground behind the columbaria. In the area included between the back walls of the columbaria, the wall of the two large rooms behind them, and a supporting wall made of basalt which shored up the ground towards the Via Appia, a large paved courtyard was made with a covered gallery on the north side near the columbaria, and with a terrace on the east towards the Via Appia,

raised more than a metre above the level of the courtyard. On this terrace an irregular rectangular hall was built, having walls on three sides but open on the

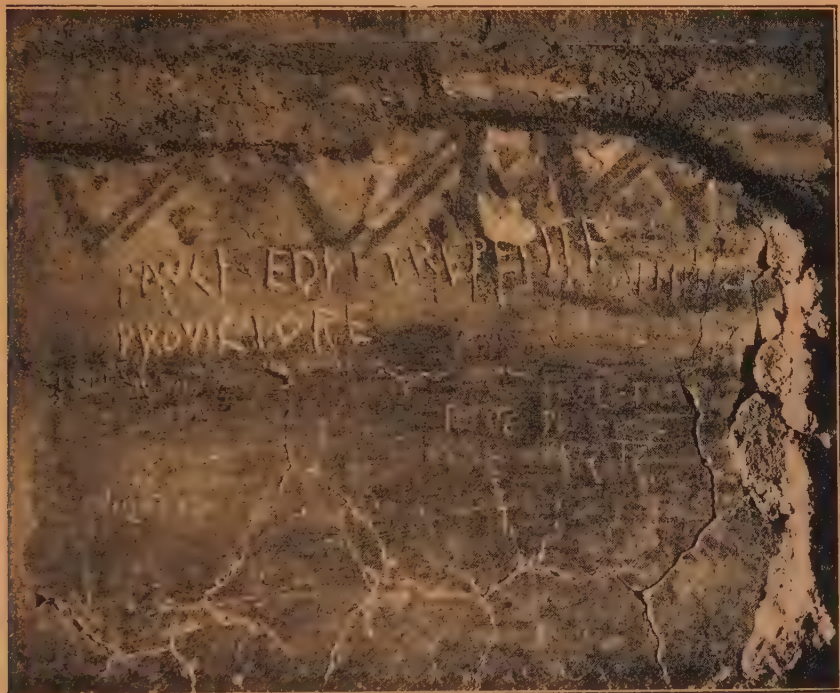


Fig. 53 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian — Graffiti invoking the Apostles Peter and Paul.

fourth side overlooking the courtyard, the roof here being supported by square pillars placed on a low wall.

A bench runs round part of the hall against the walls showing that this was a place of meeting, and an ancient Roman cippus, cemented into the floor in a corner and pierced at the bottom to allow water to escape, witnesses to meals held in this spot. Further,

the large number of graffiti on the walls and pillars show that the Christians met here to celebrate the memory of the apostles Peter and Paul, and to invoke their powerful aid by holding the so-called *refrigeria* in this place, viz. feasts of simple food in honour of the apostles. The *refrigeria* are mentioned in several of the graffiti, but most of these are merely invocations to SS. Peter and Paul, with various formulae in Latin and Greek (figs. 53-54).

This monument, which was found in the excavations under the basilica, is unique of its kind, and of paramount importance for the cult of the chief of the apostles in Rome. Since water was needed for the banquets of the *refrigerium* a stair was made alongside the courtyard of the memorial, which leads down to a well. Later on a tunnel was excavated in the tufa, and a hole made in the side of the well in order to render it accessible from a neighbouring house. All this is in a perfect state of preservation.

In fact towards the end of the second century there were three fair sized houses behind this sepulchral area, richly decorated with paintings, many of which remain, and with mosaic pavements (figs. 55-56).

These houses opened on to a street whose pavement was discovered beneath that of the mausoleum of S. Quirinus, where the entrance of one of the houses can still be seen. This road must have joined up the Via Ardeatina with the Via Appia.

These buildings, together with the memorial of the apostles Peter and Paul and various tombs, continued to exist up till the middle of the fourth century. Evidently however by that time the memorial of the



Fig. 54 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian — Graffiti invoking
the Apostles Peter and Paul.



Fig. 55 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian — House decorated with paintings.

apostles with its modest hall no longer sufficed for such an important sanctuary. A monumental basilica was therefore built in their honour exactly over the place where the ancient memorial has been recently discovered.



Fig. 56 — Cemetery of S. Sebastian - Paintings
in a house behind the columbaria.

In order to provide the necessary space for the edification of the basilica, all the buildings on the spot were destroyed: meeting rooms, columbaria and houses, down to the level best suited for the floor of the new basilica, and great foundation walls were made deep in the ground to support the outer walls and the great square pillars of the nave. In this church the nave was

separated from the aisles by large brick pillars, replacing the columns found in the other basilicas of this period. The nave ended in a semicircular open apse also supported by square pillars, and surrounded by an ambulatory which formed the continuation of the aisles.

It can be seen from this description that the basilica was of a different architectonic type from that of the other Roman Christian basilicas of the fourth century. This form was perhaps chosen because the new sanctuary was also intended to serve as a burying place. Very soon in fact the whole of the floor became filled up with graves (*formae*) facing in various directions, all the chambers beneath the basilica having been filled with earth and debris, in which condition they were found in the recent excavations.

When the basilica was built, the tomb of S. Sebastian in the catacomb below came under the left side of the nave, and the chamber in which his grave was situated was further enlarged, making an underground chapel. This was left open above, forming a confession approached by a double staircase. The church retained this form up till the beginning of the seventeenth century, and after being known in early times as the basilica of the Apostles, it took the name of S. Sebastian in the early Middle Ages.

What the reason can have been for erecting a memorial to the apostles Peter and Paul in this spot, necessitating all these subsequent works of filling up and adaptation, has not so far been settled. The excavations have shown clearly that a regular place of cult for honouring and invoking SS. Peter and Paul was established here at this period, but they have not

furnished any monumental data which offer an explanation of this fact. The most credible theory maintains that the relics of the two Apostles were removed from their primitive tombs on the Vatican hill and the Via Ostiense, and brought to this spot *ad Catacumbas*, where they remained for a period and were venerated in the memorial erected immediately after the translation, possibly until the foundation of the cemeterial basilicas over the sites of their original sepulchres.

The reason of this translation may be sought in the imminent persecution of Valerian in 258 A. D., when meetings of the Christians in their cemeteries were forbidden. The tombs of SS. Peter and Paul happened to be in well known places and surrounded by pagan tombs. It would therefore have been difficult for the Christians to visit their graves, and impossible for them to hold religious meetings there during the persecution, and for this reason their relics would have been transferred to this spot on the Via Appia, where since it was Christian property a suitable memorial could be erected with sufficient space to allow the people to meet. In any case the reason for the erection of the apostolic monument on the via Appia must be sought in a special and personal local memory of the two apostles in this site. A translation of the relics offers the most satisfactory explanation of the founding, arrangement and use of the monument, with its hall for meetings and its peculiar courtyard closed on all four sides.

After the basilica was built, a large number of mausolea sprang up around it above ground, belonging to rich Christian families. Some mausolea were already in existence before the basilica, but after this the

outdoor cemetery *ad Catacumbas* increased very much in extent during the fourth and fifth centuries. Many of these mausolea have now been excavated, bringing to light also various Christian sarcophagi *in situ*, one of which has a long important inscription, while others have very interesting sculptures. Many sepulchral inscriptions have also been found, some of which throw valuable light on the chronology of the monuments. The whole monumental group of S. Sebastian is one of the most interesting and instructive of ancient Rome.

22. THE CEMETERY OF PRAETEXTATUS

The broad hill which stretches on both sides of the Via Appia towards the north between the valley of S. Sebastian and that where stands the church of *Domine quo vadis*, is all undermined with Christian subterranean cemeteries, among which there is also a Jewish catacomb and another belonging to a syncretist sect whose tenets were predominantly pagan.

Beneath the *vigna* Rondanini, on the right of the road returning towards Rome from S. Sebastian, are the galleries of one of the largest of the Jewish catacombs, where the form of the tombs, the character of the painted decorations and the special formulae with the symbolism peculiar to Jewish sepulchral inscriptions can be studied.

A short distance beyond this, on the same side of the Appian Way, is the Christian catacomb of Praetextatus. It is large and very ancient, and contains many

important monuments. The entrance is on the Via Appia Pignatelli. The cemetery bears the name of its founder, the proprietor of the piece of ground beneath which the first Christian hypogaea were made in the first half of the second century. The catacomb was very much enlarged during the third and fourth centuries, so that with its two floors it is one of the largest of the Roman underground cemeteries. The galleries are only partly excavated.

One of the most ancient regions, probably the first nucleus of the catacomb, is at the foot of the stair which descends from the left side of the new portico over the cemetery. The level of the subterranean gallery and of the crypt on the left to which the stair leads, was originally much higher, having been subsequently deepened to provide more wall space for graves. This early gallery was the starting point of a vast network of cemeterial galleries, all excavated during the second and third centuries. The primitive crypt, as can be seen from its paintings, is of the first half of the second century. These represent Biblical scenes: Christ and the woman of Samaria, the raising of Lazarus, the healing of the woman with the issue, and one scene which has never been satisfactorily interpreted, but has been supposed to be the crowning of the Redeemer with thorns. The colouring of the frescoes is unusual.

Another interesting ancient region with its own stair, has a very wide somewhat irregular gallery as its chief artery. The walls and vault of this gallery are supported by arches and pilasters and there are cubicula on both sides of it constructed either partly or entirely

of brick, while their entrance façades are decorated with polychromatic and fancy bricks. Their structure is very ancient, probably of the end of the second century. The floor and walls of one of the crypts were richly decorated with marble, the groined vault culminates in a lightshaft, and its decoration of allegorical scenes representing the four seasons is in a complete state of preservation. An invocation addressed to martyrs buried near by can still be read, scratched in the mortar of a *loculus* made here at a later period:

REFRIGERI IANVARIVS AGATOPVS FELICISSIMVS MARTIRES

A side gallery leads to a great monumental stair, the biggest in the catacomb, which goes down to a great depth and appears to have been made to give access to a reservoir.

Some of the paintings of this cemetery are strange or rare. Thus for instance in a scene of the Good Shepherd there are sheep on his right hand, while on his left is a wild ass which the Shepherd keeps off with his stick. Pope Liberius is depicted in a richly decorated *arcosolium*, and there is a scene where the chaste Susannah is represented as a lamb between two wolves, the inscription explains that these are the "seniores," (elders) who falsely accused her.

There was a large number of martyr shrines in this cemetery. The saints Tiburtius, Valerian and Maximus were venerated above ground in a cemeterial church, while down below, "in spelunca magna," were the tombs of the martyrs S. Januarius, S. Cyrinus, SS. Felicissimus and Agapitus deacons of Pope S. Sixtus II and slain with him in the persecution of Valerian (258), and

S. Urban, identified with the Pope of that name. "Spe-
lunca magna,, (great cave) is the name given by the
Salzburg Itinerary to the wide irregular gallery mentioned
above. A great part of the Damasian inscription in honour
of SS. Felicissimus and Agapitus was found in the
pavement of the church of S. Nicola dei Cesarini, and
brought back again to the catacomb. A considerable
part of the inscription to S. Januarius was found in the
same way, but its exact original site is not known.

There is a sepulchral niche in the spelunca magna
which was very richly decorated at a later period, and
adorned with columns and slabs of marble. Opposite
this niche an apse has been cut in the solid tufa to
provide space for meetings at the venerated tomb.
This must doubtless have been the sepulchre of one of
the martyrs buried in this gallery, but which of them
cannot be determined with certainty. The tomb of
another martyr S. Simon or Zenon was honoured in a
church above ground.

The spelunca magna was used for burial up till
the beginning of the fifth century on account of the
martyrs' tombs it contained, as can be seen from the
following inscription with the consular date of 405:

HIC REQVIESCIT SVPERBVS
TANTVM IN NOMINE DICTVS
QVEM INNOCENTEM MITEM QVI SANCTI NO
VERE BEATI IN QVO MISERABILIS PA
TER OPTAVERAT ANTE IACERE DEPOS
V · KAL · AVG · STILICHONE VC BIS C

*Here rests Superbus ("Proud,,), called thus only by name,
for the blessed saints know him to be innocent and meek, in
whose tomb his unhappy father wished to rest before him, deposited
28 July under the second consulate of Stilicho "viro clarissimo,,.*

A little further along the Appian Way towards the north on the same side of the road, there is an underground cemetery which resembles the Christian catacombs, but belonged to a pagan syncretistic sect, as is shown by the pagan ideas displayed in the paintings, which represent the introduction of the soul of the defunct into Elysium, after the favourable judgment of the divinity.

23. THE CEMETERY OF S. CALIXTUS

The large piece of high ground comprised between the Vie Appia, Ardeatina and “delle Sette Chiese,” which reaches from the church of *Domine quo vadis* to the basilica of S. Sebastian, contains a very rich group of Christian underground cemeteries all united together.

In the corner of this hill, where the Via delle Sette Chiese joins the Via Appia, under a modern house and garden there is an anonymous catacomb independant of that of S. Sebastian, which was in use at the end of the third and during the fourth century. It is a small catacomb with two regions joining on to each other. A certain number of inscriptions have been found in it, and there is a picture which has not yet been completely deciphered.

A short distance from this hypogaeum and nearer to the city, lies the celebrated catacomb of S. Calixtus, full of historical monuments of primary importance. The earliest Christian cemetery here, which was united later on with the true catacomb of S. Calixtus, was excavated in an area adjoining the Via Appia during the

first half of the second century. It is not certain who was the founder. G. B. de Rossi has advanced the hypothesis that the ground belonged to a Christian branch of the Caecilii. The first hypogaeum consisted of a gallery and a double crypt, the gallery was gradually lengthened and deepened until it became twice its original height. A second floor was excavated below the first towards the end of the second century.

At a short distance away, close to a side road between the Vie Appia and Ardeatina, another hypogaeum resembling the first was made during the second half of the second century, and towards the year 200 the sepulchral area beneath which it lay became the property of the Christian community of Rome. Pope Zephyrinus (199-217) put the deacon Calixtus, who was his successor in the chair of S. Peter, in charge of this first Christian public cemetery. The catacomb was enlarged under the direction of Calixtus, and took the form of two main galleries linked up by side galleries, with several crypts, one of which became the burial place of the bishops of Rome after the death of Pope Calixtus.

The cemetery took the name of Calixtus because of all the works which he caused to be carried out in it, he himself however was not buried here, but in the catacomb of Calepodius on the Via Aurelia.

Towards the end of the third century a second region was added to the primitive necropolis of Calixtus, towards the west, with a stair of its own which has been found and put again into use. Two other regions, made and enlarged during the fourth century after the peace of the Church, considerably increased the extent of the vast underground cemetery, and the continual lengthening of

the galleries eventually produced the immense labyrinth known to us to-day, which was excavated by G. B. de Rossi, who discovered it as a result of his topographical studies.

The galleries are spread over two chief floors and include many crypts. We will now proceed to a more detailed description of the various regions of the catacomb.

The most ancient of these, called the Crypts of Lucina, consists of galleries and crypts in a region which lies immediately beneath an imposing tomb above ground, whose remains still exist close to the Appian Way. This monument shows that the proprietor of the area must have been a member of a rich and noble family. In fact inscriptions on fragments of sarcophagi of the third and fourth centuries found here show that their Christian occupants belonged to senatorial families. Two of these inscriptions read as follows:

Q. CAECILIO
MAXIMO
C. P.

*To Quintus Caecilius
Maximus
most noble boy*

.... POMPEIA . OC
TABIA . ATTICA
caECILIANA C. P.
... VIXIT MEN ...

*Pompeia Oc
tavia Attica
Caeciliana most noble maiden
... lived ... months ...*

Pope Cornelius (251-253) was buried in this part of the catacomb after his death in exile.

His inscription is brief:

CORNELIVS . MARTYR

EP.

Cornelius Martyr

bishop (fig. 57)

At the foot of the ancient stair which leads to the primitive galleries there is a crypt consisting of two



Fig. 57 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Epitaph of Pope S. Cornelius.

chambers (double cubiculum), whose vault and walls are very finely decorated with paintings (fig. 58). Besides the pictures of Daniel and Jonah, we find the Good Shepherd and the oranti which occur so frequently, both male and female, erect, with their arms raised and extended in the ancient attitude of prayer, representing the souls of the faithful in the glory of Paradise. There is also the

baptism of Christ in the river Jordan (fig. 59), a scene found also in other crypts of the cemetery of S. Calixtus, as well as in other catacombs. One unique scene, repeated



Fig. 58 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Vault of "cubiculum," decorated with paintings.

twice, represents a symbolical group of a fish with a basket beside it containing loaves of bread and a flask of wine, the fish thus being associated with the elements of the Eucharistic banquet (fig. 67). This symbol is more fully

developed in the banquet scenes found in that primitive portion of the cemetery which is properly the catacomb of Calixtus (fig. 60).

At some little distance from this hypogaeum and further away from the road, is another cemeterial region



Fig. 59 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Baptism of Christ
in the crypts of Lucina.

formed towards the second half of the second century, namely that which was enlarged later on by Calixtus, and which became the public Christian cemetery of Rome.

A large crypt in this region, not far from the primitive entrance stair, was appointed to be the burial place of the Popes under the first or second successor



Fig. 60 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Eucharistic banquet.



Fig. 61 — Cemetery of Calixtus — The Chapel of the Popes.

of Calixtus. In this crypt nine or possibly ten of the bishops of Rome were laid to rest in plain loculi, three of whom had died as martyrs for the faith (fig. 61).



Fig. 62 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Epitaph.
of Pope Pontianus martyr.

Five of their inscriptions have been found among the debris in this spot:

1. Antheros bishop
2. Pontianus bishop martyr (fig. 62)
3. Fabianus bishop martyr (fig. 63)
4. Lucius bishop
5. Eutychianus bishop

In the chief place in the sepulchral chamber, in the wall opposite the entrance, was the tomb of Sixtus II who died a martyr's death in 258. He was presiding at a liturgical gathering in a place within the cemetery precincts when he was surprised by the authorities and summarily executed with four of his deacons. The original slab inscribed with the fine epigram of Pope

Damasus in honour of the martyrs of this cemetery has been put up at the end of the crypt.

Four Popes were buried here in other crypts later on: Cornelius (see above), Gaius, Eusebius, who died as a martyr in exile, and Miltiades. Pope Zephyrinus



Fig. 63 — Cemetery of Calixtus - Epitaph of Pope Fabianus martyr.

reposed with S. Tarcisius in a sepulchral building erected above the catacomb. The latter, being a deacon, was attempting to carry the sacred elements to the bretheren during the persecution, when he was surprised and slain by the pagans. The martyr S. Cecilia was deposited in a cubiculum close to the crypt of the Popes (fig. 64). There is a fresco near her tomb representing her as an orante (fig. 65).

Opening off one of the main galleries of this region is a row of six crypts, five of which still retain the paintings which decorated them when they were first made at about 200 A. D. Here besides the scenes of Isaac, Jonah,



Fig. 64 — Cemetery of Calixtus - Cubiculum of S. Cecilia.



Fig. 65 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Fresco representing
S. Cecilia as an orante.

the raising of Lazarus and the Good Shepherd, there are others which allude to Baptism and the Eucharist. Baptism is symbolised by the miracle of Moses bringing water out of the rock to quench the thirst of the Israelites, and also by the fisherman who draws a fish



Fig. 66 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Decoration of one of the so-called crypts of the Sacraments.

from the water with his hook. There are besides two other pictures which represent actual baptism by immersion: in one of these Christ is baptised by John the Baptist, in the other this sacrament is administered to a believer.

The Eucharist is symbolically expressed by a banquet of seven persons where the food is bread and fish,

while the seven or twelve baskets filled with bread, which invariably complete this scene, allude to the miraculous refection of the people in the desert. Another painting on the vault of one of these rooms represents a table with bread and a fish on it and on the wall of



Fig. 67 – Cemetery of Calixtus – Fish with basket containing bread and wine in the early cubiculum of the crypts of Lucina.

another of the rooms a man stretches out his hand over the food on a table similarly prepared, with a woman beside it in the attitude of prayer (fig. 66). These scenes derive all their meaning from the symbol of the fish, in use since the beginning of the second century as a figure of Christ, and especially so when partaken of by believers, thus representing His body and blood (fig. 67).

The early Christians not only allegorized the Saviour under the figure of a fish as supernatural Eucharistic food, but also used the Greek word (ΙΧΘΥΣ) for fish as an acrostic representing Him, because the letters of which it is composed are the initials of the following words:

Ι(ησοῦς)	= Jesus
Χ(ριστός)	= Crist
Θ(εοῦ)	= of God
Υ(ιός)	= Son
Σ(ωτήρ)	= Saviour

In epitaphs this Greek word *Ichthys* frequently accompanies the text of the inscription as a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour.

In one of these rooms there is also the episode of Christ's conversation with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well, an allusion to the salvation obtained by the supernatural water "springing up unto eternal life," which is given to believing souls.

The miracle of the spring of water brought out of the rock by Moses is frequently represented in the paintings of the catacombs. The scene of the woman of Samaria also occurs several times. The symbolic scene of the banquet of seven persons is on the contrary rare in the other catacombs (see above, the catacomb of Priscilla) Another scene which appears later, has however much the same meaning. Here the Eucharist is represented by the multiplication of the loaves and fishes by Christ in person, who touches the baskets of bread with His rod fig. 48, p. 114. This scene occurs frequently in the second half of the third and during the fourth century.

Two martyrs of the persecution of Diocletian, Calocerus and Parthenius, were buried in a crypt in another region of the catacomb of S. Calixtus. The excavation of this region was commenced in the middle of the third century, and the galleries were used for burial during the second half of this century and the



Fig. 69 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Five oranti in celestial felicity.

beginning of the next. The tombs of the two Popes Gaius and Eusebius are in the same gallery as the crypt of these two saints.

A little further along the same gallery there is a double cubiculum made by the deacon Severus for himself and his family during the pontificate of Pope Marcellinus (296-304) (fig. 68). In the cubiculum opposite

this, on the end wall over the chief *arcosolium*, there is a large fresco of Paradise, depicted as a beautiful garden, in which there are six defunct persons, indicated by their names, five of whom are oranti, viz. in the attitude of prayer in celestial felicity (fig. 69). A garden as a figuration of Paradise occurs frequently among the pictures of the larger catacombs.

The continuation of the long gallery in which these crypts are found, puts this region in communication with a third region of the Calixtian necropolis, made in the middle of the fourth century, with a stair of its own, on the west of the central nucleus and excavated according to a regular plan. There are some magnificent round domed crypts in this region with pilasters against the walls, and cornices, all cut out of the rock. In one cubiculum there are interesting pictures of Moses removing his sandals in obedience to God's command, and bringing water out of the rock; a new rendering of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, showing Christ in the act of laying His hands upon them as they are presented to Him by two apostles; and the Good Shepherd in the midst of His sheep, while two men on the right and left of the picture respectively, stretch out their hands to take the water of life which falls in cascades from the rock, a symbol of the celestial *refrigerium* (refreshing of the soul in Paradise).

After the middle of the fourth century a fourth great region, complete with its stair, was added to the cemetery. Here also the architecture of the crypts is highly elaborate. Among the pictures which remain in the second, third and fourth regions of the catacomb, the following can be noted: the adoration of the Magi,



Fig. 70 — Cemetery of Calixtus - The adoration of the Magi.

(fig. 70) the multiplication of the loaves, the miracle of Cana, which is very rare in cemeterial painting, Moses striking the rock, the justification of the innocent Susannah and the three Children in the furnace.

Among the numerous inscriptions found in the cemetery, many of which are of prime importance, some are decorated with subjects which are rare in this type



Fig. 71 — Cemetery of Calixtus — Inscription with Christian symbols.

of monument. For example the Greek epitaph of Rufina Irene has a cross beneath the text, and the slab which closed the grave of a defunct Faustinianum has a lamb lying under a cruciform anchor beside a dove with an olive branch, a symbol of the soul received into the flock of the heavenly Shepherd in everlasting peace (fig. 71).

G. B. de Rossi with his description of the catacomb of S. Calixtus in the three volumes of "*Roma sotterranea cristiana*," has fixed the scientific method for the study of the ancient Christian cemeteries and the monuments they contain.

24. THE CEMETERY OF BASILEUS
AT SS. MARCUS AND MARCELLIANUS

In early times there were three other catacombs besides that of S. Calixtus in the stretch of land between the Vie Appia and Ardeatina, each with its own history and independant origin, viz. the cemetery of S. Soteris, nearer to the Appian Way; the cemetery of Balbina, with the basilica erected by Pope Marcus (336) in which the founder was buried; and the cemetery of Basileus which was near the Via Ardeatina and contained the tombs of the martyrs SS. Marcus and Marcellianus. Of these three cemeteries the last only has been identified and partly excavated. Its entrance is behind the garden of the Salesian monastery. There was a cemeterial church above the catacomb with the tomb of SS. Marcus and Marcellianus under the altar. They were probably buried above ground, and the church was so arranged that the altar came over the tomb of the two Saints.

Between this church and that of Pope S. Marcus in the cemetery of Balbina, Pope Damasus built a church for his own burial place, in which were also the tombs of his mother and sister. Part of his mother's inscription, which was a composition in verse by the poet Pope, was found in a cast which had been formed accidentally when at a later period some construction in masonry was made on the top of the original slab.

Several imposing crypts have been discovered in this catacomb, some of which are richly decorated and

contain fragments of sculptured sarcophagi. Among the paintings, some of the fourth century show Christ in the midst of the twelve apostles, or of the four evangelists, one of whom points to a star. In one of the crypts there are the remains of a scene which is unique in cemeterial art, viz. a man climbing a ladder, an allegory of the ascent to Paradise. Most of the crypts and galleries were excavated during the fourth century. The presence of the tomb of the two martyrs undoubtedly influenced the growth of the catacomb, whose most recent galleries towards the south run into the latest region of the catacomb of Calixtus.

Via Ardeatina

25. THE CEMETERY OF DOMITILLA AT SS. NEREUS AND ACHILLEUS

The vast catacomb of Domitilla lies underneath the hill on the west of the Via Ardeatina, and has its entrance on Via delle Sette Chiese. It takes its name from Flavia Domitilla, to whom the ground belonged at the end of the first century. This noble lady was the wife of Titus Flavius Clemens, who died as a martyr under his cousin the emperor Domitian (95-96), while his wife was sent into exile. At this period burial places were made at various spots in this area, and the first Christian hypogaea appear, some distance apart, towards the year 100. These, with the addition of new galleries, constituted the nuclei of the vast Christian cemetery

which was gradually formed here during the three following centuries, one of the most monumental catacombs of subterranean Rome, and possibly the most ancient of all as regards the early origin of its primitive hypogaea.

The first Christian hypogaea made in this area were excavated at different depths, so that the works which were carried out later to link them up were



Fig. 72 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Cubiculum of Ampliatius.

effectuated on two chief floors, spreading over almost the whole extent of the catacomb. The two earliest were a long distance apart; one, the so-called region

of the Flavii, having a handsome brick entrance backed on to the hillside, while the other, called the cubiculum of Ampliatus, has its own stair, and is decorated with very ancient paintings of landscapes in architectural settings (fig. 72). The inscription of the owner Ampliatus is still in situ over the chief arcosolium. Another hypogaeum, made shortly after in the first half of the second century, consisted of a large cubiculum with its own stair and gallery of access at a level which was subsequently that of the lower floor of the catacomb. Branch galleries were made later on each side of this main gallery, while during the course of the third century some very long galleries were excavated to the right and left of the stair, and the whole network was very much extended during the fourth century.

There are some distinct regions with regular galleries and their own stairs, on each of the two floors. One of these was formed in the second century behind the very ancient region of the Flavii, its galleries are unusually high through having been deepened at least twice during the third century.

A very interesting relic of early Christianity is conserved close to the primitive entrance of the so-called region of the Flavii. Here in the third century an L shaped hall was built of brick. This hall was open towards a little piazza in front of the entrance where its roof was supported by masonry pillars. It had thick walls on the other sides, and a bench made of brick-work covered with plaster ran round the inner walls. The hall was therefore intended for meetings in honour of the Christians buried in the cemetery. There is a well on the opposite side of the entrance, with a small

reservoir close by to hold the water drawn from the well (fig. 73).

The first Christian tombs in this neighbourhood

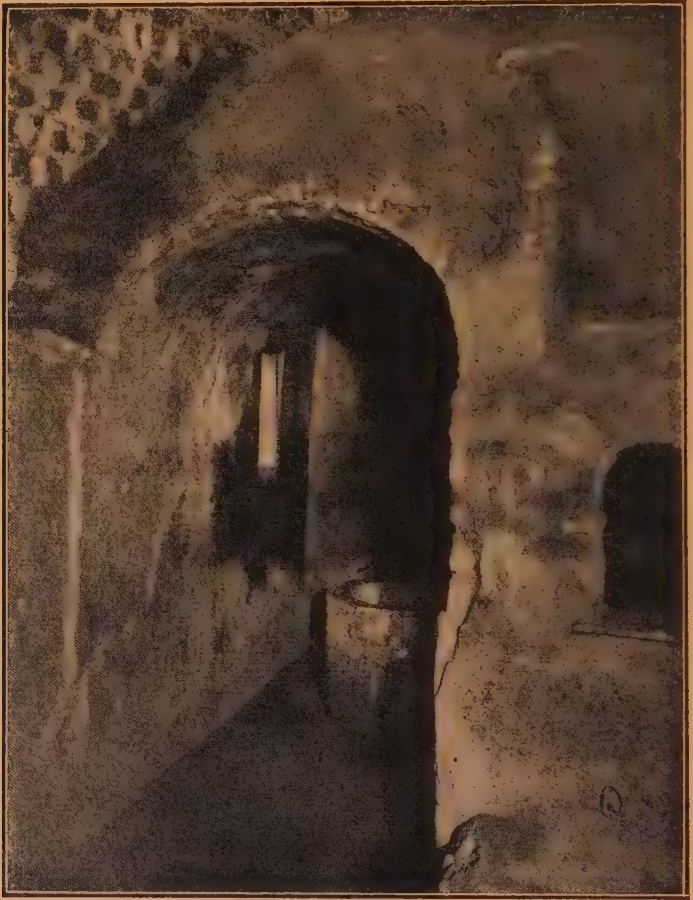


Fig. 73 — Cemetery of Domitilla - Well and reservoir.

were made at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century. A wide gallery slopes gently down into the hill from the entrance, which, as has



Fig. 74 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Great niche in Region of the Flavii.

already been said, is constructed of very fine brickwork (fig. 1). This is the so-called region of the Flavii. On either side of the gallery there are great niches cut out of the rock and intended to hold marble sarcophagi (fig. 74). The walls and vault of the gallery are decorated with purely ornamental paintings, vine branches, formal landscapes bordered with coloured lines, and little genii at play (fig. 75). There are however a few Christian scenes mingled with these, drawn from the Old Testament, viz. Daniel in the attitude of prayer between two lions, and Noah in a boxshaped ark with the dove bringing him the olive branch. These date from the beginning

of the second century and express the confident belief of the Christians that their dead, like the just of the



Fig. 75 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Ceiling decorated with a vine in the só-called region of the Flavi.

Old Testament, have been saved by the power of the Almighty from all the perils of life, and received into celestial beatitude.

Some distance away from this very ancient region, there is a large cubiculum with an antechamber, which is almost as early (fig. 76). It has its own monumental stair



Fig. 76 — Cemetery of Domitilla -
Cubiculum with antechamber.

and wide gallery of access, and its walls, ceiling and arcosolia are covered with paintings (figs. 77 - 78). The Good Shepherd occupies the place of honour in the centre of the rich decoration of the vault, this is the symbolical representation of Jesus Christ which occurs most



Fig. 77 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Wall decorations in the crypt under the great lightshaft.



Fig. 78 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Wall decorations in the crypt under the great lightshaft.



Fig. 79 — Cemetery of Domitilla —
Ceiling of the crypt under the great lightshaft.

frequently in the catacombs (fig. 79). In this very ancient painting the Good Shepherd appears as usual with a lamb on His shoulders and a sheep on each side, and represents the Saviour who carries the faithful defunct into the celestial fold of the kingdom of God. This subject later on is often treated more elaborately, as can be seen from examples in this and other catacombs (fig. 80).



Fig. 80 — Cemetery of Domitilla —
Good Shepherd on the wall of the great stair.

During the course of the second and third centuries the various scenes of the Old Testament which are repeated so often in the cemeterial paintings were reproduced here also in the crypts and arcosolia and even on the wall space between the loculi.

Several of Our Lord's miracles are also depicted with the same underlying ideas, as early as the first half of the second century. The miracles express the hope and faith that the dead have been set free from the spirit of evil and received into celestial beatitude. The raising of Lazarus, which defines this belief in a specific

manner, is a very favourite subject in all the larger catacombs. Other miracles are found later on, both here and in other cemeteries, e. g. the healing of the man born blind, and the healing of the paralytic, who strides away with his bed on his shoulders. The adoration of the Magi also occurs here several times among the pictures of the end of the third and the fourth century, (figs. 81, 82) but the subject which is most characteristic



Fig. 81 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Adoration of the Magi on the wall between two loculi.

of the catacomb of Domitilla is the representation of Christ as Teacher in the midst of the twelve apostles, or else between the two chief apostles Peter and Paul.

Besides the subjects mentioned above there is the scene of Adam and Eve with the serpent coiled round the tree of knowledge, holding the apple in its mouth, and the rare scene of the judgment of souls where Christ is seated on a throne and the defunct approach Him in humble attitudes or stand in the position of oranti with their hands outstretched in prayer.

One special region of the cemetery was reserved for an association of clerks and workmen belonging to



Fig. 82 — Cemetery of Domitilla — Arcosolium with Biblical scenes.



Fig. 83 — Cemetery of Domitilla -
Basilica of SS. Nereus and Achilleus.

the Annona, a state department which provided the corn for the free distribution of bread to the populace. Some of the pictures of this region show these people engaged in their employments, others are of purely Christian subjects. The Good Shepherd and His flock are depicted in one of the arcosolia, while among the sheep, on the right and left of the Shepherd, are a man and a woman in the attitude of prayer. They are the defunct buried in the arcosolium, received into the flock of the Lord in Paradise.

Three martyrs were buried in the catacomb of Domitilla; SS. Nereus and Achilleus and S. Petronilla. At the end of the fourth century a basilica was erected over their tombs and at the same level, this has been excavated and roofed in (fig. 83). There is a fourth century

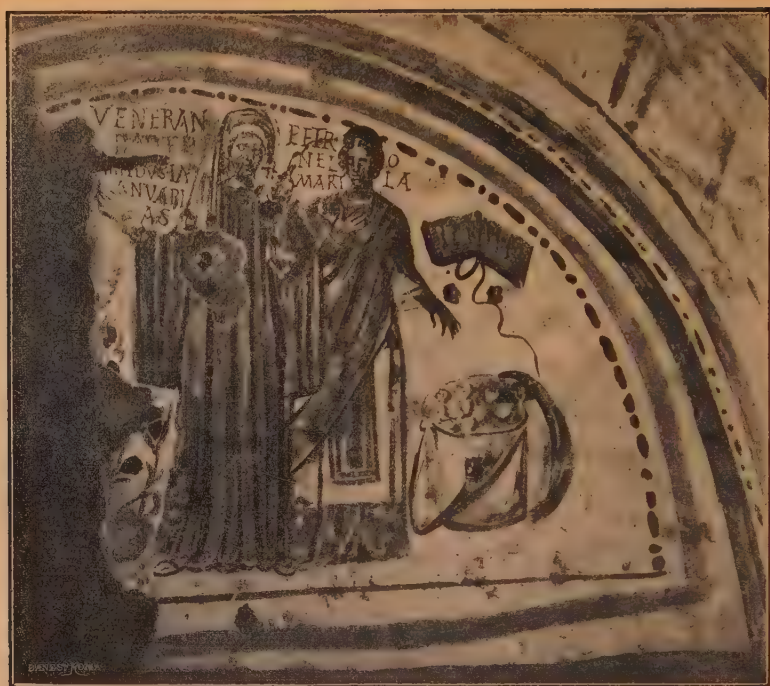



Fig. 84 — Cemetery of Domitilla — S. Petronilla welcoming the defunct Veneranda into the heavenly kingdom.

crypt behind the apse of the basilica which contains a painting representing S. Petronilla welcoming the defunct Veneranda into the heavenly kingdom (fig. 84). Similar scenes are often met with, in most of them the defunct are placed between two saints who act as protectors and intercessors and, as such, introduce them into Paradise, represented as a beautiful garden.

Many inscriptions and remains of Christian sculptured sarcophagi are attached to the walls of the basilica of SS. Nereus and Achilleus. These were found partly in the basilica itself, and partly in the outdoor cemetery, where remains of tombs have been discovered. Some of these

epitaphs allude to clergy of the urban Title "de Fasciola", now the basilica of SS. Nereus and Achilleus, near the Baths of Caracalla; the cemetery of the Via Ardeatina had special relations with this ancient church. Many inscriptions found in the excavations have been fixed on the walls of the galleries and crypts below, and many are still in situ on intact tombs. Some of them contain acclamations and prayers for the souls of the defunct. Among these is an epitaph of which the first part is in Latin, but written in Greek characters, while the concluding prayer is in Greek:

ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΟ · ΕΤ · ΛΕΟΝΤΙΑ ✠
 ΣΕΙΡΙΚΕ · ΦΕΙΛΙΕ · ΒΕΝΕΜΕΡΕΝ
 ΤΙ · ΜΝΗCΘΗC · ΙΗCΩVC
 ΟΚΥΡΙΟC · ΤΕΚΝΟΝΕ 

*Demetrius and Leontia to Sirica, well-deserving daughter.
 O Lord Jesus remember our child.*

Another text is as follows:

VICTORIA REFRIGERet
 ISPIRITVS TVS IN BONO

Victoria, may thy soul be refreshed in the (eternal) good.

A sure faith in a blessed death in Jesus is expressed in the following Greek inscription:

BONΩCH
 BONΩCΩ
 ΥΙΩ
 ΚΟΙΜΩΜΕΝΟΙ
 ΕΝ ΚΩ ΗΜ

Bonosa to Bonosus her son who sleeps in our Lord.

26. THE CEMETERY OF THE ANNUNZIATELLA

An ancient Christian hypogaeum of modest dimensions has been found close to the country church of the Annunziatella, 7 kilometres from Rome, and consequently beyond the zone of the Christian cemeteries belonging to the city. It contains a crypt with rich decorations of the fourth century, and derives its importance from the painting on the ceiling of this crypt, which represents the judgement of Christ. The Saviour is depicted in the centre of the vault, seated, with the book of the law in His left-hand. On the four sides of the ceiling are saints (apostles or martyrs), they make the gesture of speech as advocates or protectors of the souls of the defunct at the tribunal of Christ. In the four corners, four oranti, each between two sheep, show that the sentence of the Divine Judge has been favourable, and that the believers deposited in the crypt have been received into the flock of the Good Shepherd in Paradise.

Via Ostiense

The chief glory of the Via Ostiense is, for Christians, the tomb of the apostle Paul. After his martyrdom his body was placed in a hypogaeum close to this road, and between it and the Tiber, in the same spot where it now lies under the high altar of the stately basilica. No Christian cemetery was made here however, either close to the sepulchre or beyond in the Tiber valley. Pagan hypogaea however have been found close up to

the tomb of S. Paul, so that there could never have been more than a few isolated Christian burial places in this area during the first three centuries. After the building of the first sepulchral basilica here by Constantine the Great, an open air cemetery came into being close to the sanctuary of the apostle, and several sculptured sarcophagi and many inscriptions which are now collected in the cloister and in the museum of the Benedictine monastery, came from there.

Another Roman martyr, S. Timothy, was buried near S. Paul, and a chapel was erected over his tomb. Its precise locality is not known, nor whether there was a Christian cemetery there. The only big Christian cemetery near the Via Ostiense is that of Commodilla, which lies under the rocky hill behind the apse of S. Paul's, and at some little distance from the basilica.

27. THE CEMETERY OF COMMODILLA

The entrance is in a vineyard on the Via delle Sette Chiese, exactly opposite the point where the Via della Garbatella branches off in the direction of the town. The excavations have brought to light the central part of the catacomb with the sanctuary of the martyrs buried here. The principal gallery of this region, which is very wide, as well as some of the side galleries probably originally formed part of an ancient quarry. The primitive entrance was cut in the side of the hill at the end of the wide gallery, it is now walled up. The first Christian catacomb was made here in the third century, no doubt under the auspices of the

proprietaryress Commodilla, from whom it derived its name. Three martyrs of the persecution of Diocletian were buried in three different places in the main gallery leading from the primitive entrance, viz Felix, Adauctus and Merita.

In the fourth century a narrow side gallery was excavated to the right of this main gallery and parallel with it, this was lengthened and deepened several times



Fig. 85 — Cemetery of Commodilla —
Subterranean chapel with the tombs
of the martyrs Felix and Adauctus.

to facilitate burials close to the martyrs, and later on the original wide gallery was enlarged at its further end and strengthened with supporting walls so as to form a large underground chapel round the tombs of the three saints, similar to that of S. Hippolytus on the Via Tiburtina (fig. 85). On this occasion the entrance to the side gallery was walled up, rendering it inaccessible, and it was consequently found completely intact

in the recent excavations, with its loculi closed, and with many interesting cemeterial objects still in their places, including pottery lamps.

The end wall of the chapel was richly decorated, and these decorations were renewed later on in the seventh century, as is shown by the various layers of painted stucco, one on the top of the other. In the apse over the tomb of S. Felix a great deal of this has disappeared, but the figure of S. Luke the evangelist is in perfect condition on the wall alongside. The paintings on the left wall are also in a fine state of preservation, they include a representation of Jesus Christ surrounded by the saints of this cemetery and Stephen the protomartyr over the tomb of S. Adauctus, and another picture over the grave of a Christian matron called Turtura, who was buried here in the seventh century. In this picture the Madonna is seated in the centre, holding the Divine Child, SS. Felix and Adauctus stand on either side of her, and in front on the right of the Madonna is the defunct Turtura. There is a long sepulchral inscription in verse underneath the picture (fig. 86).

The tomb of S. Merita was in the same gallery but nearer to the primitive entrance, there are remains of frescoes here also with a picture of the martyr. A wide stair was made at the same time as the chapel in order to provide a more direct means of access to the sanctuary. This stair is still in existence and serves as the present entrance to the catacomb.

In this cemetery there is a special arrangement for increasing the available grave space. Square pits about two metres deep were dug in several places close to



Fig. 86 — Cemetery of Commodilla —
Decoration of the tomb of the defunct Turtura.

the edge of the galleries in the central region, and loculi were cut in their sides. The sides of the lightshafts were utilized in the same way, while in some of the wider side galleries half the floor has been deepened so as to form a parallel narrow gallery at a lower level with loculi on both sides. The fossors who worked in this cemetery evidently had to solve the problem of getting as many graves as possible into a very limited space, the reason for this being no doubt the desire of many Christians to be buried as close as possible to the tombs of the martyrs, hoping in this way to avail themselves of their powerful aid in entering the kingdom of heaven. A region of the catacomb behind the sanctuary stair is still waiting to be excavated, where high galleries and stairs descending to other levels are partly visible.

28. THE SO-CALLED CEMETERY OF S. THEKLA

The Itineraries for the shrines of the Roman martyrs have retained the memory of a sanctuary of S. Thekla, located by the Salzburg codex on a low hill to the east of S. Paul's, where, according to the same codex, the body of the saint reposed in an underground crypt. As a matter of fact a small catacomb has been discovered in the little hill close to the small bridge beyond the church of S. Paul, consisting of three galleries only, with crypts. The principal burial place here is a subterranean chapel with an apse and with two rows of pillars supporting the ceiling. The whole arrangement

of this underground hall exhibits the special characteristics of the historic sepulchres of Roman martyrs who were the objects of public veneration. As no other martyr's tomb is known to exist in this neighbourhood, it may be considered as certain that the shrine which was subsequently enlarged in this way was the tomb of the martyr Thekla, although no positive proof of this identification has yet been forthcoming.

There are some fourth century paintings in one of the crypts of the little hypogaeum, the subjects are the usual ones: Moses, Daniel and the lions, Jonah, the sacrifice of Abraham, and also the Good Shepherd, and Christ with the book of the Gospel. There are a few inscriptions.



FOURTH GROUP

CEMETERIES ON THE WEST OF THE CITY ON THE RIGHT BANK OF THE TIBER

All the catacombs described so far are on the left of the Tiber in the zone outside the city walls which stretches from the Via Flaminia to the Via Ostiense. There are two ancient Roman roads on the other side of the river, and along these also there were well known Christian underground cemeteries with historic martyr tombs: the Via Portuense and the Via Aurelia.

Via Portuense

The ancient Index of the Roman cemeteries (See above p. 34) mentions two cemeteries close to the Via Portuense, the first, which was nearest to the gate, was called *ad insalatos* (*imphalatos*) in the early manuscripts, a name which has not been transmitted with certainty, nor have we any explanation of it. This cemetery contained a church erected over the tomb of a martyr, S. Felix, the site of which is so far unknown. The second, which is indicated by a topographical name as well as by that of the founder, viz the cemetery of

Pontianus ad ursum piliatum ("at the bear with a cap," this may have been an inn sign) has been found, but regular excavations have never been undertaken there.

29. THE CEMETERY OF PONTIANUS AT SS. ABDON AND SENNEN

This catacomb is situated on the top of the hill of Monteverde, and is entered from Via Alessandro Poerio. Only a small part of it is accessible. It is not excavated in the tufa like those on the other side of the Tiber, but in a yellow clayey rock which is less suitable for the purpose, it is consequently in a bad state of preservation which makes exploration difficult. Since no regular excavations have been made here it is not possible to localize the primitive nuclei, or to fix the period when the cemetery had its origin on the property of a Roman Christian called Pontianus, from whom it takes its name. Those parts which can be visited belong to the end of the third and the fourth centuries.

The cemetery contains a monument which is unique of its kind in the catacombs, viz a cubiculum turned into a baptistery with steps made in it to adapt it for baptism by immersion. This baptistery was made in the fifth or sixth century for the convenience of the country people, and was probably connected with the cemeterial church built in honour of the martyrs buried in the catacomb, and used by the local Christians for liturgical gatherings.

There are two or three paintings here of special interest. The bust of Jesus Christ is repeated twice on the vault of the stair which leads down from the ground above.

Then on the lower part of the back wall of the baptismal piscina is a richly gemmed cross rising out of the water which still covers the bottom of the cubiculum. Above the cross is the scene of the baptism of Christ. These paintings are sixth century. There is a brick tomb near the piscina with a plaster front imitating a sarcophagus, this has a fresco above it representing the Saviour giving the crown of eternal life to the two chief martyrs of the cemetery, SS. Abdon and Sennen, who are accompanied by two other saints. Near this are two cubicula closed by a wall in which there is a square opening (*fenestrella confessionis*) to allow the tombs to be seen. On this wall are represented three other martyrs venerated in this cemetery, Milix, Pomenius and Pollion, who are mentioned in the seventh century itineraries. The same itineraries give us the notice of another cemeterial church in this spot over the tomb of a martyr named Candida, near the basilica of SS. Abdon and Sennen. There are a few inscriptions still left in the catacomb, and the remains of some fourth century paintings.

30. THE CEMETERY OF GENEROSA AD VI PHILIPPI

Out in the country beyond what may be termed the sub-urban zone of the Christian underground cemeteries of Rome, at the sixth mile of the *Via Portuense*, a catacomb has been discovered which was made chiefly for the use of the Christian rural population in the neighbourhood. The catacomb is on the top of a hill close to the Tiber, and originated in the burial of

three martyrs of the persecution of Diocletian in the property of a Christian in this spot, close to the sacred grove of the Arvali. Probably the owner of the piece of ground had a family hypogaeum here, in which the bodies of Simplicius, Faustinianus and Viatrix (Beatrix) were placed. According to their legend the two former were put to death and their bodies thrown into the Tiber. Their sister Viatrix followed along the bank as they were carried away by the stream, and when they came to land at this spot where the river makes a sharp bend, she pulled them ashore, and the fact becoming known she also was put to death. The legend attributes the burial of all three martyrs to a matron called Generosa. A study of the catacomb shows clearly that it had its origin in the gallery which contained the tombs of the saints. Pope Damasus made a little cemeterial basilica here, backing the apse on to the hillside in front of this gallery, and placing the church in direct communication with the martyrs' tombs by means of a door alongside the apse. In the sixth century when this part of the hypogaeum had developed into a small chapel, a very fine fresco was painted on the wall built up against the loculi of the saints. The Saviour is seated in the middle, He has a nimbus decorated with a cross, on the right are SS. Simplicius and Viatrix and on the left SS. Faustinianus and Rufinianus. This last was probably added because the donor of the picture held this saint in special devotion. There is a picture of the Good Shepherd over another tomb. The catacomb is an interesting example of a Christian country cemetery.

Via Aurelia

The ancient Via Aurelia boasted of four separate cemeterial sanctuaries outside the Porta Aurelia (now Porta S. Pancrazio) according to the concordant testimony of the itineraries, viz. those respectively of S. Pancras, SS. Processus and Martinianus, the two Felixes, and S. Calixtus in the cemetery of Calepodius, all within the three mile radius. Beyond this zone lay the sanctuary of S. Basilides at the twelfth mile. None of all these cemeteries have as yet been properly excavated, so that only a few scattered galleries are known of here and there, they are partly filled with earth and practically impassable.

31. THE CEMETERY OF S. PANCRAS .

The basilica of S. Pancras, erected over the tomb of the martyr, was probably originally a modest building of the fourth century. It was subsequently enlarged by Pope Symmachus (490-514) and reconstructed in the seventh century by Pope Honorius I (625-638). It has always conserved the memory of an ancient Christian cemetery. The catacomb, which is reached by a stair from the basilica, lies immediately under the church and stretches away from it for a long distance in various directions. There are some crypts of unusual form, and three cubicula have remains of paintings with marked individual characteristics. There are a few other galleries

close to the entrance of Villa Doria Pamfili which probably belong to this cemetery. Those parts of the catacomb which are accessible have been completely ruined, and the historical development of the great cemetery can only be ascertained by means of regular excavations. The pious pilgrims of the seventh century venerated other tombs besides that of S. Pancras in the basilica, namely those of S. Artemius, of S. Paulinus and of a S. Sophia (Wisdom) with her three daughters Agape (Charity), Elpis (Hope) and Pistis (Faith), all in different places in the catacomb below. This last group of names raises the suspicion that their origin was legendary.

32. THE CEMETERY OF SS. PROCESSUS AND MARTINIANUS

Cemeterial galleries have been found in four different points in that part of Villa Doria Pamfili which borders on the Via Aurelia, revealing the presence of a large catacomb in this locality. It must undoubtedly be identified with the cemetery of the martyrs Processus and Martinianus, where in the fourth century there was a basilica over the tomb of these saints. This basilica was ceded to the Montanists by the usurper Eugenius (392-394), but the Catholic community recovered it later, for Pope Gregory the Great recited a homily there on the anniversary of the martyrs. The itineraries also mention the venerated tomb of a S. Lucina in this cemetery. The galleries that are visible have obviously been wilfully devastated, and no monuments of any interest remain.

33. THE CEMETERY OF THE TWO FELIXES

The name of this cemetery is connected with the legends which have grown up round the memory of Felix II, who was elected bishop of Rome when Pope Liberius was sent into exile by the emperor Constantius after the synod of Milan in 355, while the struggle with Arianism was at its height. The antipope Felix II was buried in this cemetery on the Via Aurelia, the legend turned him into a martyr and also transported the tomb of Felix I to this spot near his sepulchre, the true burial place of the latter being the crypt of the Popes at S. Calixtus. In consequence of this the cemeterial church took the name of the *duo Felices*. In the Vigna Pellegrini on the right of the Via Aurelia, close to the point where the Via del Casale di Pio V branches off the main road, there is the entrance to an ancient stair which communicates with a small network of badly ruined cemeterial galleries. These probably reveal the site of the cemetery of the two Felixes, since this spot coincides with the topographical indications in the itineraries.

34. THE CEMETERY OF CALEPODIUS

This cemetery is known. The entrance to its empty devastated galleries is in the Vigna Armellini, opposite the Casale di Pio V. There are no cemeterial pictures or historical monuments in those parts of the catacomb

which are accessible, nothing being left there beyond a few fragments of inscriptions. The remains of the wall of an apse have been built into the farmhouse in the vineyard, this probably belonged to the basilica erected by Pope Julius I (337-352) over the tomb of S. Calixtus who was buried in this cemetery after his martyrdom in 223. The catacomb must therefore have certainly existed at the beginning of the third century, and was founded by a Christian named Calepodius whose name it has retained.

Via Cornelia

There were no large Christian underground cemeteries on the Via Cornelia, which ran along the bottom of the valley between the Vatican hill and the Janiculum, skirting the north wall of the Circus of Nero. S. Peter, the chief of the apostles, after his glorious martyrdom in this place, was buried in a hypogaeum on the right of the Via Cornelia. No early Christian cemetery however came into being round his sepulchre. For one reason the nature of the ground was not suitable for the excavation of a catacomb, and the area was all occupied by pagan tombs which reached as far as the Via Triumphalis, near the present Vatican palace. As a consequence there could never have been more than a few isolated Christian family sepulchres in this spot. After the construction of the Constantinian basilica over the tomb of S. Peter, a vast Christian outdoor cemetery was formed from the fourth century

onwards, containing handsome mausolea and various kinds of tombs. Many ancient Christian sculptured sarcophagi have come from this cemetery. One of the finest of these is the sarcophagus of Junius Bassus (who died as a neophyte in 359), now in the Crypt of S. Peter's; another magnificent sarcophagus is in the S. Peter's museum, and there are others in the Lateran museum. Various inscriptions from the outdoor cemetery of the basilica of S. Peter have also been conserved.

These notes on the ancient Christian underground cemeteries of Rome will serve, notwithstanding their brevity, to demonstrate the extreme fundamental importance of this magnificent group of monuments for the study of the primitive church in Rome and the religious life of its members during the first centuries of our era.

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GLOSSARY

Arcosolium — Arched recess containing a table tomb

Arenario — Ancient quarry (literally -sandpit).

Basilica — Rectangular hall terminating in an apse, usually with nave and aisles.

Carme — A poem.

Cathedra — Ceremonial chair or throne.

Columbarium — Place of burial containing small niches for cinerary urns.

Cryptoporticus — Underground cloister.

Cubiculum (or *Crypt*) — Underground chamber.

Deposit — Word used to denote burial, it is frequent in early inscriptions and implies a temporary resting place.

Epigraphy — The study of inscriptions.

Fenestrella — Small opening in the side of an altar or enclosure to allow the tomb within to be seen.

Forma — Grave under the floor.

Fossor — Workman employed in the excavation of the galleries and graves in the catacombs.

Gallery — Underground passage.

Graffito — Writing scratched on a wall.

Iconography — The study of the technical characteristics of ancient pictures.

Hypogaeum — Underground burial place.

Locus — Narrow grave cut in the wall of a gallery or cubiculum, and closed in front with tiles or a slab of stone.

Lunette — The flat semicircular back of an arcosolium, enclosed in the arch above the tomb.

Monument — Any object, large or small, which preserves a memory.

Nymphaeum — A richly decorated summer house containing fountains, plants etc.

Palaeography — The study of ancient writing.

Pozzolana — The special sand used by the Romans for making mortar.

Refrigerium — The refreshing of the soul in Paradise.

Table tomb — Tomb shaped like a box and closed by a slab of stone on the top, usually cut out in the tufa within an arcosolium.

Transenna — Perforated stone screen, used for fencing off a tomb, arcosolium etc.

Tufa — The soft porous volcanic rock in which the Roman catacombs are excavated.

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